

Rodney House School



Use of Reins When Walking

Reviewed:

Signed by Governor:

Ethos

Rodney House School places a high value on ensuring the children are part of the local community, and are visible within every day community activities such as shopping and going to the park. Rodney House has high aspirations for the children who attend, and being independent is a key aim. We recognise, and acknowledge, that many children struggle with moving safely in and around the community and so strategies are put in place to keep children and staff safe without restricting their access to local activities. Walking reins are designed to help guide and support children and adults with challenging behaviour or learning difficulties to keep them safe in the community.

Social interaction is vital to many special needs individuals for continual development and is also important to their parents/carers as a means of fun, quality time spent with the individual, but also for the carer to receive support from others. Without access to an aid to safely transport the individual to a set location i.e. the local park/day trip, individuals may be excluded from these activities and many parents/carers would become reliant on others for transport and in some cases home bound - this would be detrimental to the individual and the parent/carer. In school, the use of reins enables children to fully access the local amenities in a safe and supportive way.

Walking reins reduce the risk of injury to the pupil and also to members of the public, which may be incurred if the pupil has no awareness of danger and is a flight risk.

The type of walking reins most commonly used at Rodney House School are the back packs. Wrist reins have been used, but very rarely. It is possible that in the future other types of reins are used such as chest padded reins for older, larger children/young people, or reins with side loops.

Guidance

When using a walking support for the first time, a risk assessment is completed which is reviewed regularly. When risk assessments are completed, the risks to the child, but also to both staff and members of the public are considered. A common sense approach is taken when working with pupils with SEND requiring walking reins.

Families will be made aware in the school Welcome Pack about the possible use of reins to keep their child safe and the risk assessment process. All risk assessments to be shared with the parent/carer.

Before each trip/visit:

Staff should visually check reins are in good working order and fit appropriately to the child before using reins.

Staff should risk assess the nature of the location visited, staffing ratios and individual pupil needs before deciding if reins, wrist strap or holding hands is appropriate.

Parents are to be made aware if their child uses reins through their child's individual risk assessment.

Using the reins

- It is important for safety reasons that the rein strap is always held behind the child and not pulled from the front. This ensures the strain is on the very strong webbing belts and not on the PVC chest pad.
- Some individuals can undo the handling rein attachment of the walking reins and this may lead to them absconding on an outing: be vigilant.
NB It is important when selecting a walking rein to take this into consideration.
- School staff to conduct regular reviews of risk assessments and the appropriateness of reins.
- **Children wearing the reins should never be left unattended.**
- The walking rein should be the appropriate size for the individual and be fitted correctly ensuring it is a snug fit, but not too tight as to cause discomfort/injury. The pinch test on the webbing can be adopted to ensure the harness is not too loose. When fastening the walking rein care should be taken to ensure that no clothing is caught in between the buckles. An audible "click" should be heard when fastening the black Side Squeeze buckles.
- The rein should be checked regularly for damage to both components and webbing. If damage or fraying occurs the harness should not be used and should be replaced immediately.
- Walking reins should be used for the duration of an outing as required, but should not be used unnecessarily or for long periods of time once the individual is back within a safe environment where the flight risk has been eliminated i.e. home/school.
- If the individual is in an enclosed area i.e. park and the carer is not keeping hold of the reins, the handling rein should be either fully detached or securely tied up so it does not pose a tripping risk to the individual.
- The walking reins used by Rodney House School staff are made of polyester webbing and a PVC sleeve/pad. For usage during hot summer months it is important to ensure the individual does not become overheated wearing the harness as this may become uncomfortable. The carer should check the individual regularly during use.

- When crossing roads the carer holds onto both the walking rein and the individual's hand.
- Walking reins are designed to help gently guide individuals when out walking, they should not be used roughly to drag or pull back an individual as this may cause the wearer to fall and injure themselves. Carers will need to use discretion on this point as there are emergency circumstances where it may need to be overruled i.e. the individual is heading in front of a moving vehicle.
- When the walking reins are not in use, they are stored safely out of children's reach. When not in use they are locked away.
- Staff who are suffering from existing wrist/arm/back conditions are to have a risk assessment completed.
- Chest Padded Walking Reins may be needed in cases of severe challenging behaviour or where the individual is known for propelling themselves forward.

In the unlikely event where parents/carers choose not to allow the use of reins, there must be a discussion about how to keep their child safe in the community without using reins. If a new strategy is agreed, this will form part of the risk assessment. If school staff risk assess the impact on the safety of the child and others to be too great a risk to take, the child may not be able to join in trips and visit outside of school. The impact on the child's learning experience, the staffing ratios both in school and on visits, must be explained to parents/carers. Ultimately if the parent/carer insists on a strategy which is unsafe, the school can refuse to implement this strategy and advice should be sought.

The safety of the child must be paramount in any consideration.

Policy to be reviewed annually for 2 years from the date of first approval, and then every 3 years.