



## Positive Handling Policy

Policy owner	Inclusion Lead
Policy approved by	Education Standards Committee
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Review frequency	Annual
Next review	September 2026

## **Rationale. (Duty of Care)**

This policy sets out the school's approach to the use of physical intervention. It is a fundamental duty of care to ensure that all pupils and staff are safe. While we prioritise de-escalation and preventative strategies, we recognise that in rare circumstances, pupils may become dysregulated and require restrictive physical intervention to prevent harm. All staff must be equipped with the confidence and skills to manage such situations safely and in a legally compliant manner.

**Pupils** need to be safe and encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour. The vast majority will behave well, but some (generally only a few and very occasionally) become dysregulated and require support or intervention. They need to know we are able to control them safely and confidently. Our pupils nearly always respond well to the school rules and conventions. Situations in which physical intervention may be needed are therefore likely to be relatively few in number.

**Staff** need to be safe and confident in how they manage inappropriate behaviour. They have to be clear about options open to them when all the normal systems have failed or when there is a clear emergency in which, for example, talking calmly to someone in danger is irrelevant. They need to be free of undue worries about the risks of legal action against them if they use appropriate physical interventions; and need to know that we and the LEA will offer support if they are challenged. Training for staff should be available at regular intervals.

**Parents** need to know that their child and those who are teaching her or him are safe and free from disruptive influences or danger. They also need to know that they will be properly informed if their child is the subject of physical intervention; and they need to know the nature of the intervention and the rationale for its use. The school is open to any parental queries about its policy and review.

## **Legal Authority**

The law permits teachers and other staff authorised by the Headteacher to use such force as is **reasonable in all circumstances** to prevent a pupil from:

- Committing a criminal offence.
- Injuring themselves or others.
- Causing damage to property.
- Behaving in a way that prejudices good order and discipline.

All school staff are also permitted to use reasonable force to defend themselves. This legal authority is provided under **Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006** and is outlined in the Department for Education's guidance on the use of reasonable force in schools.

## **Our approach: 'Prevention is better than cure'**

Our primary approach is to prevent the need for restrictive physical intervention. This is achieved through a well-planned, differentiated curriculum and a comprehensive behaviour policy. Restrictive physical intervention is always a **last resort**. We use only the **minimum force required** to resolve a situation safely, taking into account the

pupil's age, gender, and understanding.

Positive Handling is then our method of last resort, after all other approaches have been tried or in situations of clear danger or extreme urgency. **95% of crisis situations can be dealt with through calm, dignified and skilled intervention.** (The use of non confrontational approaches and understanding of messages received from body language are vital).

We utilise only the minimum force required to resolve the situation safely. How we respond always has regard to the circumstances and to the age and understanding of the child or young person.

### **Planning for Restrictive Physical Intervention**

Where there is a foreseeable risk that a pupil's behaviour may require restrictive physical intervention, the school will undertake an **individual pupil risk assessment (IPRA)**. This will be a collaborative process involving parents/carers, the pupil, and key staff. The IPRA will:

- Identify triggers and strategies for de-escalation.
- Specify what reactive strategies to use, including the types of holds and at what stage they should be deployed.
- Identify key staff who are trained and briefed on the plan.
- Be shared with all staff involved in the pupil's care, including those in alternative provision or on off-site visits.

### **Who may use physical intervention and when**

The law allows teachers, and other persons who are authorised by the Head Teacher to have control or charge of pupils to use such force as is reasonable in all the circumstances to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- committing a criminal offence (including behaving in a way that would be an offence if the pupils were not under the age of criminal responsibility);
- injuring themselves or others;
- causing damage to property (including the pupil's own property);
- engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils, whether that behaviour occurs in a classroom during a teaching session or elsewhere.

All school staff are also, like anyone else, allowed to use reasonable force (the minimum necessary) to defend themselves.

We take the view that staff are not expected to put themselves in danger; and that removing pupils and themselves from a source of danger is a proper thing to do. We appreciate the integrity of our staff and value their efforts to rectify situations that are difficult and in which they exercise their duty of care for their pupils. However, we do not require them to go beyond what is reasonable. In particular it is acceptable for any member of staff to decide that they will not use physical intervention for personal reasons.

### **Positive Handling Strategies**

Reasonable force is not defined legally in isolation. It must be justified as

appropriate by the circumstances. We use only the minimum force that is needed to restore safety or appropriate behaviour; and we take account of the age, understanding and gender of the pupil. An uncaring attitude is likely to provoke pupils. The **TEAM TEACH** approach advocates;

**At least two members of staff**

**Minimum force and time**

**Maximum care and control**

**Last resort – after use of behavioural management strategies**

**Acceptable** forms of intervention in this school include all stipulated on the **TEAM TEACH** foundation course. (**Friendly hold, single elbow, double elbow, figure of four, the wrap, the shield etc**) which allow;

- leading or guiding a pupil by the hand or arm, or shepherding them with a hand in the centre of the back;
- holding a pupil who has lost control until they are calm and safe;
- physically moving between and separating two pupils;
- blocking a pupil's path;
- where there is immediate risk of injury, any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of 'reasonable force' – for example to prevent a pupil running into a busy road or hitting or hurting someone;
- using more restrictive holds in extreme circumstances.

**“We care enough about you not to let you be out of control”**

It is also acceptable for doors to be locked to ensure pupil safety, as long as a member of staff is always with the pupils in such circumstances. (Care needs to be taken here regarding Health and Safety Fire Regulations).

Staff may move, defend themselves, lead, restrain or block someone, bearing in mind the whole time their own safety as well as that of others and of the child who is the subject of any restraint or other intervention.

**It is unacceptable** and likely to be illegal or grounds for disciplinary action for staff to use any physical intervention designed to cause pain or injury including:

- any form of corporal punishment, slapping, punching or kicking;
- holding by the neck or collar, or otherwise restricting the ability to breath;
- holding by the hair or an ear;
- twisting or forcing limbs against a joint;
- tripping up a pupil or holding an arm out at neck or head height to stop them;
- holding a pupil face down on the ground or sitting on them;
- shutting or locking a pupil in a room, except in extreme situations whilst summoning support.

Staff should also avoid touching or holding a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent. The dignity of pupils is vital, and we need to foster their self respect.

Physical interventions are not in general used to achieve a search of clothing or property even if we had good reason to believe that a weapon or dangerous drugs were being concealed.

## Using Physical Intervention

Except in cases where there is immediate danger we would normally try other ways of resolving or de-escalating a situation. These could include:

1. Calmly re-stating the rules and expectations for the situation;
2. Removing other pupils from the situation and thus from danger of from being an audience;
3. Use of physical proximity, but not in a threatening way;
4. Encouraging the pupil to withdraw to a safer and calmer situation;
5. Calling another adult for support or to take over.

If more than minor physical intervention is judged to be necessary the teacher or adult in charge should:

- Send for the assistance of a senior member of staff. **Two members of staff working together without a senior leader should only be used as an extreme last resort.**
- Remove other pupils from the scene if possible;\*
- Continue to talk calmly to the pupil explaining what will happen, and under what circumstances the physical intervention will cease (but not in a threatening way);
- Use the minimum force necessary and cease the intervention as soon as it is judged safe.

In some circumstances we may consider it appropriate to call the police.

Following a significant incident of physical intervention, when a pupil has resisted or challenged and force has been used, the teacher or adult responsible should as soon as possible inform the Headteacher. We acknowledge that such events are stressful for both pupils and staff and both parties will need time to recover, with the chance of debriefing and resolving the situation.

**NB** – In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to use physical intervention on intruders from outside the school community. Points 1 – 4 listed above should still be used, and again, only when resolving and de-scaling strategies have failed.

## Intervention Removal Areas

There will be a designated 'safe space' identified within the school in which a pupil will be able to deregulate in a safe, harm-free environment. In most cases, this will be the Head of School's office.

## **Recording and Reporting Incidents**

The school has a **statutory duty** to record and report any significant use of force to parents/carers. A "significant incident" is defined as any use of force that:

- Is not a minor guiding or redirecting of a pupil.
- Results in or has the potential to cause injury.
- Involves a physical restraint hold.
- Is part of a pre-planned intervention.

A full written account of every significant incident will be made on the school's record-keeping

system (e.g., Bromcom) and will include:

- Name of the pupil and staff involved.
- Time, date, and location of the incident.
- Description of the incident, including the events leading up to it.
- Details of the intervention used (e.g., type of hold, duration).
- Any injuries sustained or property damage caused.
- Names of any witnesses.

This report will be provided to the pupil's parents/carers as soon as is reasonably practicable, following the incident. This formal notification is a legal requirement.

Time should also be spent after the incident to:

- discuss the incident with the pupil as soon as possible. The aim is for the pupil to learn from the incident so that Positive Handling is not needed in the future.
- interview staff involved and any other witnesses;
- inform the pupil's parents/carers and social worker if relevant (letter and phone call)
- record any disagreements expressed by the pupil or adults about the event;
- take any appropriate further action, liaising with LEA, Governors or Unions as appropriate, and acting within the LEA's Child Procedures

**All restraining incidents will be reported to the governing body**

### **Planning for Physical Intervention**

Where we think a pupil might require physical restraint we plan in advance and know who will do what. This may come in the form of an individual pupil risk assessment which will be shared with all involved in the pupils' care. This planning includes helping pupils to avoid provoking situations, helping them find success and minimise frustration, and develops our own skills. It also helps us see better where we can head off difficulties when we spot them early enough. The pupil's individual behaviour plan (IBP) would;

- involve the parents and the pupil to gain their views and to ensure that they are clear about what specific action the school might need to take;
- manage the pupil (e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict, at what stage and what type of holds to be used);
- identify key staff who should know exactly what action they should be taking. Any member of staff who may have to use a physical intervention should always be fully briefed about the child in question, and it is best if they are well known to the child.

### **Training**

We are clear that all staff have a duty of care to provide a safe environment for every pupil and member of staff within school. We therefore adopt a best practice approach and maintain a record of safe management of all school situations through our risk assessments. In most cases, the Head of School/Headteacher will be responsible for the safe handling of a dysregulated pupil, supported by another senior member of staff.

## **Complaints**

We hope that by adopting this policy and keeping parents well informed should help to avoid the need for complaints. Any disputes that do arise about the use of force by a member of staff will be dealt with in accordance with the LEA Child Protection procedures, a copy of which is available in school. This could in some circumstances lead to an investigation by police and social services.

Complaints about this policy should be directed to the head or chair of governors.

## **References**

Reference can be made to the following documents:

- British Institute of Learning difficulties (BILD): Code of Practice for Trainers in the Use of Physical Interventions 2001.
- Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006