



Physical Restraint Policy

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Prepared by: KED/JOH/MAK

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Approved by: TZL

This Policy applies throughout the School from the EYFS to Year 6.

Definition

"The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils." (Department for Education guidance Use of Reasonable Force (July 2013)).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools>

This policy acknowledges that restrictive practices can have long-term psychological effects, especially for children with prior experiences of trauma, loss or adversity. Therefore, any physical intervention must be seen as an emergency measure, used only to prevent immediate risk and never as a behavioural strategy.

Legal framework

The 2013 guidance applies whenever force is used to control or restrain pupils. The legal framework is set out in the following legislation: Offences Against the Person Act 1861, The Children and Young Persons Act 1933, Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Management of Health and Safety at Work (Amendment) Regulations 2006 Manual Handling Regulations 1992, The Children Act 1989, Disability Rights Act 2001, The Children Act 2004, Section 93 Education & Inspection Act 2006, Section 45 Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified 1991), Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 and the Human Rights Act 1998. From September 2025, under Section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, schools will have a statutory duty to record and report to parents every significant incident involving the use of force on a pupil.

It also takes into account guidance on 'Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention' and aligns with duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014.

Any citizen has the common law power to intervene in an emergency to use reasonable force in self-defence, to prevent another person from being injured or committing a criminal offence. All staff who have control or charge of pupils also have statutory power, in addition to common law power. Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act (2006) enables school staff to use such force as is reasonable and proportionate to prevent a pupil from doing or continuing to do any of the following:

- Committing an offence (or, for a pupil under the age of criminal responsibility, what would be an offence for an older pupil)
- Causing personal injury to any person (including the pupil themselves)
- Causing damage to the property of any person (including the pupil themselves)
- Prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the School or among any pupils receiving education at the School, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

Government guidance, *Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention* (June 2019), also requires schools to take steps to reduce the use of physical intervention for vulnerable children.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/812435/reducing-the-need-for-restraint-and-restrictive-intervention.pdf

The School ethos

Pupils at the School receive high-quality care and education, which recognises and caters for their individual needs both educationally and pastorally. The School recognises that challenging behaviour is often the result of a breakdown in communication. The School understands that behaviour is a form of communication, particularly for children who have experienced trauma or who have unmet sensory, emotional or developmental needs. Staff aim to build safe, trusting relationships that support co-regulation and emotional resilience. The ethos of the School reflects our desire to communicate effectively with pupils, staff and parents to prevent such breakdown. Compliance with the School's Behaviour Policy will work to keep all adults and pupils safe and provide firm boundaries and limits, as well as setting out the sanctions that follow breaking them. Parents will be kept informed about serious breaches of rules in accordance with the Behaviour Policy and always when restraint has been necessary.

General aims

Staff at the School recognise that the use of reasonable force should only be used if no other strategy is more appropriate in order to secure pupil safety and well-being and also to maintain good order and discipline. Staff are trained to use de-escalation, co-regulation and relational strategies wherever possible, ensuring physical contact is only used when there is no other viable alternative to prevent serious harm. This Policy should therefore be read in conjunction with our SEND, Behaviour and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies.

Specific aims

- To protect every person in the School community from harm
- To protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful
- To provide adequate information and training for staff so that they are clear as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour and to deal effectively with violent or potentially violent situations

The School uses Team Teach to provide training for specific staff. Physical restraint reminders are shared with all staff annually.

Why use restraint?

Physical restraint should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a pupil's action or perhaps by removing a physical object, which could be used to harm themselves or others. It is only likely to be needed if a pupil appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and behaviour. Such situations are often related to overwhelming stress or trauma responses, and the priority must always be to reduce harm with empathy and respect for the child's dignity. Staff understand the neuroscience of stress and its effect on behaviour.

It is not possible to define every circumstance in which physical restraint would be necessary or appropriate and staff will have to exercise their own judgement in situations which arise within the above categories. Staff should always act within the School's Code of Conduct, particularly in dealing with disruptive behaviour.

Staff should be aware that when they are in charge of pupils during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are acting in loco parentis and should, therefore, take reasonable action to ensure pupils' safety and well-being.

Failure to physically restrain a pupil who is subsequently injured or injures another could, in certain circumstances, lead to an accusation of negligence.

Alternative strategies to prevent and de-escalate behaviours that precipitate the use of physical intervention

There are some situations in which the need for physical restraint is immediate and where there are no equally effective alternatives, e.g., if a pupil is about to run across a road. In many circumstances, there are alternatives, e.g., the use of assertiveness skills such as:

- The 'broken record' in which an instruction is repeated until the pupil complies
- Use of a distracter, such as a loud whistle, to interrupt the behaviour (such as a fight), long enough for other methods of verbal control to be effective
- Withdrawal of attention (audience), e.g., if an action such as damage to property is threatened
- Other techniques designed to defuse the situation, such as the avoidance of confrontation, or the use of humour (in these cases, the incident can be dealt with later when emotions are no longer running high)
- The employment of other sanctions consistent with the School's Behaviour Policy
- Use of space, e.g., changes to the environment, moving around
- Use a non-confrontational stance and posture, including facial expressions and intonation
- Giving simple positive messages reinforcing any positive behaviour
- Use co-regulation strategies such as a calm tone of voice, breathing with the pupil or modelling self-regulation
- Reduce demands and offer choices where appropriate
- Recognise and name emotions, helping pupils to label their feelings in the moment

Use of physical restraint

Physical restraint should be applied as an act of care and control with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the pupil to regain self-control. It should never take a form which could be seen as a punishment. All teachers and support staff are authorised to use physical restraint if the result of not doing so would be likely to cause physical harm to a child. Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions should be adequately trained in their safe and lawful use, as well as in preventative strategies. School leaders should ensure that the chosen training reflects the principles set out in the latest government guidance.

Staff are only authorised to use reasonable force in applying physical restraint, although there is no absolute definition of this, as what constitutes reasonable force depends upon the particular situation and the pupil to whom it is being applied.

Department for Education guidance *Use of Reasonable Force* (July 2013) states the following:

What is reasonable force?

- The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils
- Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances, such as breaking up a fight or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury
- 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed
- As mentioned above, schools generally use force to control pupils and to restrain them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact, such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom
- Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example, when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention
- School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases, it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the pupil

When can reasonable force be used?

- Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder
- In schools, force is used for two main purposes: to control pupils or to restrain them
- The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances

Schools can use reasonable force to:

- Remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so
- Prevent a pupil from behaving in a way that disrupts a School event or a School trip or visit
- Prevent a pupil from leaving the classroom, where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others
- Prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground
- Restraine a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts

Schools cannot:

- Use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment

As a general rule, only the force necessary to stop or prevent the behaviour should be used, in accordance with the guidelines above. Staff should use the minimum force for the shortest amount of time possible.

There are some forms of physical intervention, which may involve minimal physical contact, such as blocking a pupil's path or the staff member physically interposing him or herself between the pupil

and another pupil or object. However, in some circumstances, direct physical contact may be necessary.

In all circumstances, other methods should be used if appropriate or effective physical restraint should be a last resort. They should prevent injury, pain and distress.

When physical restraint becomes necessary

Use of force should always be a last resort. Staff must consider the risks of physical intervention compared to other non-restrictive strategies and whether the intervention is proportionate, necessary, and in the best interests of the pupil.

DO

- Check for known trauma triggers or sensory needs before initiating contact
- Use a calm, slow pace and give the child time to process instructions
- Identify hazards and people likely to come into contact with them
- Tell the pupil what you are doing and why
- Prompt positive responses
- Control the environment, issue clear guidance, provide training and change working practices to reduce exposure
- Use the minimum force necessary
- Involve another member of staff if possible
- Tell the pupil what she must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition)
- Use simple and clear language
- Hold limbs above a major joint if possible, e.g. above the elbow
- Use holds demonstrated in staff training
- Relax your restraint in response to the pupil's compliance
- Offer emotional support and validation during and after the incident

DON'T

- Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil
- Attempt to reason with the pupil

DON'T DO THE FOLLOWING UNLESS NOT DOING SO COULD REASONABLY BE EXPECTED TO RESULT IN SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH

- Involve other pupils in the restraint
- Touch or hold the pupil in sexual areas
- Twist or force limbs back against a joint
- Bend fingers or pull hair
- Hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing, e.g., around the neck
- Slap, punch, kick or trip up the pupil

Vulnerable pupils

Some pupils may exhibit challenging behaviour in response to overstimulating environments, stressful situations or an inability to communicate distress in any other way. This can make them more vulnerable to experiencing physical intervention and restraint and it is likely the experience will be traumatising. Staff are trained to recognise the impact of developmental trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

Schools should be mindful of pupils who may be vulnerable, such as (but not limited to):

- Pupils who have learning and other disabilities
- Pupils who are experiencing mental health difficulties
- Pupils who have experienced trauma in their lives, for example, looked after children, refugee children, children living with domestic abuse and pupils with child protection plans

Under the Equality Act 2010, it is essential that schools can demonstrate that reasonable adjustments have been made to ensure any policy on physical intervention and restraint does not disadvantage these pupils.

Schools must demonstrate that the specific needs of these pupils have been considered and that the School will tailor their approach accordingly to avoid discrimination against these pupils.

School policies on behaviour management should uphold the rights of vulnerable pupils, ensure their safety and dignity, and work in partnership with parents to reduce the need for physical intervention and restraint.

Vulnerable pupils will be subject to the requirements set out in this Policy, but schools will also need to meet the following extra requirements:

- Vulnerable pupils whose behaviour is likely to increase the risk of physical intervention and restraint should have a behaviour support plan in place from the outset and pupils and parents should be fully involved in agreeing this plan. However, it should be noted that not all vulnerable pupils will require this
- The plan should set out the strategies for managing challenging behaviour and should include a hierarchical response ranging from prevention, de-escalation and detailing how incidents will be dealt with
- The plan should be based on an assessment of the pupil's particular needs and how these contribute to challenging behaviour, including any triggers for challenging behaviour and what steps can be taken to avoid these triggers and maintain a positive learning environment for the pupil
- The School should seek to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour to develop proactive strategies aimed at reducing the likelihood of using reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions. This includes working with the pupil, parents, and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies
- The plan should include any techniques for de-escalating situations and how best to manage challenging behaviour in order to avoid use of physical intervention and restraint
- Forms of restraint or intervention to be used should be identified and agreed in advance and the circumstances for its use set out clearly so that pupils and parents understand the circumstances in which it will be used
- The plan should include which staff members will be responsible for its implementation and what specific training they will receive to support them in this role

- Behaviour support plans should also cover any transitions that a pupil may experience between services or locations, as movement to unfamiliar places may be a trigger for challenging behaviour
- Schools using forms of physical intervention involving seclusion or withdrawal that potentially restrict a pupil's liberty should have written rules about how and when these measures will be used and should ensure parents and (where age appropriate) pupils' consent in advance to their use

Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities

For pupils with SEND or vulnerabilities, individual behaviour plans will be developed in consultation with parents and relevant professionals. These plans should include preventative strategies and guidance on what types of interventions (if any) are appropriate.

Use of physical restraint must never be based on disability-related behaviour alone and must comply with duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Post-incident reflection and pupil voice

Following any incident involving physical intervention, staff must engage in a reflective debrief to consider what happened, why it occurred and how best to support the pupil going forward. The child should also be given a developmentally appropriate and emotionally safe opportunity to share their perspective. This process supports emotional repair, strengthens relationships, promotes learning for all involved and informs any necessary changes to practice or planning.

Actions after an incident

Physical restraint often occurs in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for the staff involved and the pupil. **A member of the Senior Leadership Team should be informed of any incident as soon as possible** and will take responsibility for making arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised. An appropriate member of the teaching staff should always be involved in debriefing the pupil involved and any victims of the incident should be offered support, and their parents informed.

If the behaviour is part of an ongoing pattern, it may be necessary to address the situation through the development of an appropriate intervention, which may include the involvement of outside agencies or other strategies agreed by the relevant SEN Co-ordinator.

It is also helpful to consider the circumstances precipitating the incident to explore ways in which future incidents can be avoided.

In line with the new statutory requirements coming into effect from September 2025, all significant incidents involving the use of force must be formally recorded and reported to the parents or carers of the pupil involved. A 'significant incident' is defined as any instance in which the use of reasonable force goes beyond ordinary, appropriate physical contact between staff and pupils.

All such incidents must be recorded immediately using the Pupil Restraint Report Form (see Appendix 1). The completed form should be printed and signed by both the staff member involved and the Head or Deputy Head (Pastoral). A scanned copy must then be uploaded to CPOMS to ensure it remains secure, unalterable and part of a numbered record.

Every section of the form must be completed in full, providing a comprehensive account in case the incident is later subject to review or complaint. A member of the Senior Leadership Team will contact the pupil's parents or carers as soon as possible, typically on the same day, to explain what occurred, outline the reasons for the intervention and offer the opportunity to discuss the matter. All incidents will be reported to the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and the Head and will be subject to ongoing monitoring.

Risk assessments

If we become aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, we will plan how to respond if the situation arises in a carefully considered intervention. Such planning will address:

- Management of the pupil (e.g., reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict, the holds to be used if necessary)
- Actions and/or reasonable adjustments for vulnerable pupils
- Involvement of parents to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the School might need to take and contribute from their experience
- Briefing of staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training or guidance)
- Identification of additional support that can be accessed if appropriate

Complaints

A clear restraint policy, adhered to by all staff and shared with parents, should help to avoid complaints from parents. It is unlikely to prevent all complaints, however, and a dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation, either under disciplinary procedures or by the police and/or local authority children's social care under child protection procedures.

This Policy will be monitored and reviewed on a three-year basis by the Senior Leadership Team.

Linked policies

- Anti-bullying Policy for Pupils
- Behaviour Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Code of Conduct for Other Adults
- Complaints Procedure
- Health and Safety Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy

APPENDIX 1

RECORD OF RESTRAINT	
Date of Incident:	Time of Incident:
Pupil's Name:	DOB:
Member(s) of staff involved:	
Adult witnesses to restraint:	
Pupil witnesses to restraint:	
Outline of events leading to restraint:	
Outline of incident of restraint (including restraint method used – please see Appendix 2 for Team Teach reference list):	
Description of any injury sustained and any subsequent treatment:	
Date/time parent/guardian informed of incident:	
By whom informed:	
Outline of parent/guardian response	
Name: _____	Signature: _____
Name: _____	Signature: _____
Brief description of any subsequent inquiry/complaint or action:	

APPENDIX 2

POSITIVE HANDLING TECHNIQUES

1. Arm Responses

- 1. Side Step-in
- 2. Drop Elbow
- 3. Pump
- 4. Conductor
- 5. Clock
- 6. Crossover

2. Clothing Responses

- 1. Tube Grip
- 2. Closed Fist Hold – One Hundred
- 3. Closed Fist Hold – Two Hundred
- 4. From Behind

3. Hair Responses

- 1. One-handed Hold
- 2. Two-handed Hold
- 3. Oyster
- 4. Knuckle Roll
- 5. Knuckle Slide

4. Neck Responses

- 1. Steering Wheel
- 2. Fix and Stabilise
- 3. Windmill
- 4. Snake
- 5. Elbow Swing
- 6. Spin out of Strangle
- 7. Fix and Stabilise Bar and Brace
- 7a. Bar and Brace
- 8. Elbow Guide out of Headlock

5. Body Responses

- 1. Fix and Stabilise
- 2. Bar and Gate
- 3. Sweep Away
- 4. Entwined Fingers
- 5. Dynamic Release

6. Prompts, Guides and Separation

- 1. Show and Go
- 2. Caring C Guide
- 3. Help Hug
- 4. Turn, Gather, Guide
- 5. Half Shield
- 6. Arm Waltz
- 7. X-support
- 8. Single Person Double Elbow

7. Arm Responses

- 2. Sitting on chairs with Change of Face
- 2a. Sitting in Beanbag with Change of Face
- 3. Response to Deadweight
- 3a. Response to Deadweight
- 5. Small Child Escort

8. Two Person Holds

- 5a. Response to Deadweight
- 8. Change of Face
- 8a. Alternative Change of Face