

Policy on the use of Positive Handling of Pupils



September 2026

To be reviewed 2027 or as required

The Purpose of this Document

This document sets out the school's position in relation to the use of reasonable force, physical restraint and other restrictive interventions. It details the legal position and best practice in this area.

The term "restrictive intervention" is used as an umbrella term for physical and non-physical actions intended to prevent, restrict or subdue the movement of a pupil or part of their body.

We believe that everyone has a right to:

- Recognition of their unique identity
- Be treated with respect and dignity
- Learn and work in a safe environment
- Be protected from harm, violence, assault and acts of verbal abuse.

Pupils and their parents attending schools and settings have a right to:

- Individual consideration of pupil needs by the staff who have responsibility for their care and protection;
- Expect staff to undertake their duties and responsibilities in accordance with the school's policies;
- Be informed about school rules, relevant policies and the expected conduct of all pupils and staff working in school;

It is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a pupil is proper and necessary. Professional judgement must apply in all cases. The main factor is not about 'touching' per se but whether the touching is appropriate or inappropriate. For some pupils touching may be a particularly sensitive issue e.g. for cultural reasons or the child may have been abused.

Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper or necessary:

- a. Holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school;
- b. When comforting a distressed pupil;
- c. When a pupil is being congratulated or praised;
- d. To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument;
- e. To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching; and
- f. To give first aid.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's behaviour and bullying policy which sets out a number of strategies and expectations designed to avoid situations where reasonable force might be needed to be considered. However, it is recognised that in rare instances this is unavoidable.

What the Law says

Can school staff use force to control or restrain a pupil?

- Under the 2006 Education and Inspections Act, section 93 allows members of staff to use reasonable force to control or restrain a pupil. The power conferred by section 93 is in addition to the common law power of a citizen in an emergency to use reasonable force in self-defence, to prevent a person from being injured or committing a criminal offence, and to prevent damage or injury to property. However, section 93 also makes clear that authorised staff may use force to prevent behaviour that prejudices the maintenance of school discipline regardless of whether that behaviour would also be counted as a criminal offence
- Section 45 of the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006, also allows school to use reasonable force to search pupils for weapons without their consent, but only where there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that a pupil has a weapon. However, if resistance is suspected staff should call the police
- It is always unlawful to use force as a punishment. This is because it would fall within the definition of corporal punishment, abolished by section 548 of the Education Act 1996.

In deciding whether the use of reasonable force or another restrictive intervention is appropriate, staff should consider whether there is a less restrictive and effective alternative, whether the intervention is likely to reduce the relevant risk or escalate the situation, and the pupil's individual circumstances, including age, size, SEND, medical conditions and other vulnerabilities.

In the following situations, staff must judge whether or not a physical intervention would be reasonable or appropriate:

- There is a risk to the safety of staff, children or visitors;
- Where there is a risk of serious damage to property;
- Prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils receiving education at the school, whether during a teaching session or elsewhere
- Causing personal injury to, or damage to property of any person including the pupil himself
- Committing any offence, including anything that would be an offence if that young person were not under the age of criminal responsibility.

This judgment will take into account the circumstances of the incident. All staff should be aware that the use of a physical intervention in response to a clear or developing danger of injury is intended to be used to manage behaviour positively to prevent a deterioration of the situation.

Staff Training

We recognise that it is very rare that one of our pupils be the subject of having to be restrained using reasonable force. We have excellent behaviour management policies and practice and our schools are well ordered and calm. Pupils, staff and parents know and understand this. Staff are aware of this policy and in the course of their everyday working lives employ a range of strategies to deal with pupil behaviour. Training on the use of force is also covered as part of our on-going child protection training and members of staff are trained in positive handling. However, individuals have statutory power to use force by virtue of their job. So we cannot lawfully prevent teachers or other staff whose job involves having control of charge of pupils from using that power regardless of whether they have received training.

Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions receive appropriate training in their safe and lawful use, together with preventative and de-escalation strategies. The school will consider the individual needs and risks within the school when determining the level and frequency of training required. Where there is an identified risk that particular staff may regularly need to use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions, the school will consider appropriate risk assessments and measures to reduce the risk of injury.

Definition of Member of Staff

Any adult who works at the school and any other person the Head teacher has authorised to have control or charge of pupils, including support staff whose job normally includes supervising pupils such as teaching assistants, learning support supervisors, learning mentors and lunchtime supervisors.

This can also include people whom the Head teacher has given temporary authorisation for control or charge of pupils whose job does not normally involve supervising pupils such as catering or premises related staff and unpaid volunteers.

Extent of the responsibility of those authorised

Where are authorised members of staff allowed to control a pupil in this manner?

Staff have the power in law to use force where:

- The member of staff and pupil are on the premises of the school.
- They are elsewhere and the member of staff has lawful control or charge of the pupil i.e. on trips or visits.

This provision applies whether the pupil is at school or on an organised activity – e.g. field trip or visit. However the section does cover all situations in which it might be reasonable to a degree of force. For example, everyone has the right to defend himself or herself against attack provided they do not use a disproportionate degree of force to do so. Similarly, in an emergency, for example if a pupil was at immediate risk of injury or on the point of inflicting injury on someone else, any member of staff would be entitled to intervene.

Types of Incident

Decisions on whether the precise circumstances of an incident justify the use of force must be reasonable i.e. would any reasonable person with similar experience have reacted in a similar way? Typically such decisions have to be made quickly, with little time for reflection. Nevertheless, staff need to make the clearest possible judgements about:

- The seriousness of the incident – if force is not used to control the situation is the likely outcome going to be worse for all concerned? If it is, then using force may be justified.
- The chance of achieving the result by other means – Could I achieve the same result in some other way, and not have to use force?
- The relative risks associated with physical intervention compared with using other strategies – Is it likely to cause less damage or stop the incident as quickly as possible, if I were to just step in rather than try any other strategies?

Examples of such situations that particularly call for judgements of this kind include:

- A pupil attacks a member of staff or another pupil.
- Pupils are fighting, causing risk of injury to themselves or others.
- A pupil is committing, or on the verge of committing deliberate damage to property.
- A pupil is causing, or at risk of causing injury or damage by accident to themselves, another pupil or property, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials or objects.
- A pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave school other than at an authorized time. Refusal of a pupil to remain in a particular place is not enough on its own to justify use of force, BUT it would be justifiable if allowing the pupil to leave would entail a serious risk to the pupil's safety or to the safety of other pupils or staff. As all our pupils are under 11 years, we view absconding from the premises, or from a member of staff who is responsible for them, as a serious risk to safety.
- A pupil persistently refuses to follow an instruction to leave a classroom.
- A pupil is behaving in a way that seriously disrupts a lesson.
- A pupil is behaving in a way that seriously disrupts a school sporting event or school visit.

In these examples use of force would be reasonable (and therefore lawful) if it was clear that the behaviour was sufficiently dangerous or disruptive to warrant physical intervention of the degree applied and could not be realistically dealt with by other means. Wherever possible, these judgements should take account of the particular characteristics of the pupil including his or her age, understanding and any SEN or disability that he or she may have. This would include the outcomes of any risk assessment and, as appropriate, any specific strategies and techniques set out in the pupil's positive handling plan.

Positive Handling Plans and Risk assessments

What if a pupil is likely to need to be restrained because they have SEND?

We will assess the frequency and severity of incidents requiring use of force that are likely to occur in the school as a whole, and we will also make individual risk assessments for particular pupils who's SEN and/or disability is associated with extreme behaviour. An individual risk assessment is also essential for a pupil who's SEN and/or disabilities are associated with:

- Communication impairments that make them less responsive to verbal communication e.g. autism
- Physical and/or sensory impairments
- Conditions that make them fragile e.g. haemophilia, brittle bone syndrome or epilepsy
- Dependence on equipment such as wheelchairs, breathing or feeding tubes

If a pupil is deemed to be in one of the above categories they will have a positive handling plan which will set out clearly the techniques that should be used and those that should not normally be used. Any planned use of physical intervention should be compatible with a pupil's plan and properly documented in school records. Where appropriate, plans will be developed with the pupil and their parents/carers and should identify reasonable adjustments, known triggers, preventative and de-escalation strategies. Where there is an identified risk of the need to use reasonable force or another restrictive intervention, an appropriate risk assessment will be put in place. Plans will be reviewed periodically and following any significant incident.

As far as possible staff that come into contact with such pupils should be aware of the relevant characteristics of those pupils particularly:

- Situations that may provoke difficult behaviour, preventive strategies and what de-escalation techniques are most likely to work.
- What is most likely to trigger a violent reaction, including relevant information relating to any previous incident requiring use of force
- If physical intervention is likely to be needed, any specific strategies and techniques that have been agreed by staff, parents and the pupil concerned.

Information from parents will be valuable and some of this may be sensitive, so consent must be sought in order to share this kind of information. But if consent is withheld unreasonably, the information may still be made available to staff in the interests of minimising the use of force for that child. Designated staff to be called if incidents related to particular pupils occurs. This does not necessarily mean waiting for them to arrive before taking action, if the need for action is urgent. Teach pupils who are at risk how to communicate in times of crisis and strategies to use in a crisis and ensure all staff are familiar with those strategies.

Positive Handling

- Must only be used for the minimum amount of time necessary to diffuse or resolve the immediate situation
- Must not inflict pain or be punitive
- Must not impede breathing
- Must avoid vulnerable parts of the body (neck, chest, genitals, or undue weight on spine)
- Must avoid hypertension, hyper flexion and pressure on or across joints

Where an intervention is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and, where possible, use an alternative strategy. Staff should also consider the pupil's welfare and dignity, including the impact of intervening in front of other pupils.

All incidents where positive handling has been used will be recorded and reported in the usual way.

Reasonable Force

Who decides what reasonable force is?

There is no legal definition of when it is reasonable to use force. Force can only be regarded as reasonable if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it. However members of staff have a duty of care towards all pupils to keep them safe.

To be judged as lawful:

- The force used would need to be in proportion to the consequences it is intended to prevent.
- E.g. Force cannot be justified to prevent trivial misbehaviour

Before using force staff will, wherever practicable tell the pupil to stop misbehaving and communicate in a calm and measured manner throughout the incident. Staff will not give the impression of acting out of anger or frustration or to punish a pupil, and will make it clear that physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary.

The following approaches are regarded as reasonable in appropriate circumstances:

- Holding for security and to reduce anxiety where there is potential risk, even if the child is not yet out of control. This is best used when the child is anxious or confused. Its purpose is to defuse or prevent escalation. Staff should take care that their actions should in no way be capable of being interpreted by the child as aggression.
- Physically interposing between children
- Blocking a child's path
- Pushing if restricted to situations where reasonable force is used to resist a child's movement, rather than a forceful push that might cause the child to fall over
- Escorting a child by the hand or arm.

- Passive physical contact resulting from standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path:
- Active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the hand or arm
- Ushering a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the pupil's back
- In more extreme circumstances, using appropriate restrictive holds which may require specific expertise or training

Where there is a high risk of death or serious injury any member of staff would be justified in taking any necessary action. Such situations could include preventing a pupil running off the pavement and onto a busy road or preventing a pupil from hitting someone with a dangerous object. Staff should make every effort to avoid acting in a way that might be reasonably expected to cause injury. However in the most extreme circumstances such as risk of death or serious injury, it may not be possible to avoid injuring a pupil. Staff should always avoid touching or restraining a pupil in a way that could be interpreted as sexually inappropriate conduct.

Sometimes a teacher should not intervene in an incident without help (unless it is an emergency). For example, when dealing with an older pupil or a physically large pupil, or more than one pupil, or if the teacher believes he or she may be at risk of injury. In those circumstances the teacher should remove other pupils who might be at risk, and summon assistance from a colleague or colleagues, or where necessary phone the Police. The teacher should inform the pupil(s) that he or she has sent for help. Until assistance arrives the teacher should continue to attempt to defuse the situation orally, and try to prevent the incident from escalating.

Holds to be Avoided

- Holding a child around the neck or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict a child's ability to breathe
- 'Forcing a pupil forward when in a seated position because of the risk of positional asphyxia
- Staff should also avoid any restraint that affects a pupil's airway, breathing or circulation, including covering the mouth or nose or applying pressure to the neck or abdomen
- Any hold that inflicts pain in order to gain compliance
- Slapping, punching or kicking a child
- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint
- Tripping a child
- Holding a child by the hair or ear
- Holding a child face down on the ground

The procedure for restrictive physical intervention set out below must always be followed:

- Give the child clear warning. Offer an escape route from the situation, for example, through calming or following instructions
- Once the restrictive physical intervention is judged necessary it should happen quickly, smoothly and confidently

- Always remain calm and talk in a conciliatory tone. Ignore any abuse and let the high emotional state it run its course
- Once things begin to calm, it can be coupled with significant changes in restrictive physical intervention, this should be on staff terms, not when demanded by the child
- The aim is to talk through the situation and discuss the behaviour that caused the whole episode
- The extent of force used should be no more than necessary to control the situation
- An incident report should be completed

Recording Incidents

If force is used against a pupil, who will know about it and what records will be kept?

Every significant incident where force has been used against a pupil must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable after the incident. The requirement to record applies even where the use of reasonable force or another restrictive intervention has been agreed with parents as part of a pupil's Positive Handling Plan or other behaviour support plan.

The record should include, as a minimum:

- the names of the pupil and staff directly involved
- any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code
- the date, time, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- a brief account of what happened, including what led up to the incident, any identified or potential triggers, and preventative or de-escalation strategies used
- where relevant, the type and degree of reasonable force applied
- details of any physical injuries sustained
- why the use of force was considered necessary in the circumstances; and
- any post-incident support, including medical treatment or other support provided

The existing school incident-recording system may be used for this purpose, provided that it captures the information above.

The member of staff involved in an incident is usually the person who will compile the report and this will be checked over by senior staff. Differing accounts of the same incident should all be recorded. The senior staff involved will decide if it is appropriate that the parents / carers should be given a copy of the incident report in its entirety (particularly if this becomes or is part of a child protection enquiry or criminal enquiry). The record is likely to form part of the educational records of the school, either in the SEN file of the child if they have one, or the behaviour file, as such the parent / carer is entitled to see it should they wish within 15 school days of receipt of the parent's written request.

After any recordable incident it is best practice that parents are informed as soon as is reasonably possible. Parents should be given a copy of this policy and information on post-incident support if requested. All injuries should be recorded in accordance with school procedures and relevant injuries to staff or pupils should be reported to the Health and Safety Executive – this can be done online or by phone. The website gives a list of major injuries and serious near misses that need to be reported to them immediately. 0845 300 99 23 (www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/index.htm)

Members of staff who have been assaulted may wish to report this to the police.

Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and preventing them from leaving. The removal of a pupil from class does not constitute seclusion. Seclusion should only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. Any incident involving seclusion must be recorded and reported to parents in accordance with the recording and reporting procedures in this policy.

Post Incident Support

What happens after a pupil has been the subject of reasonable force?

Serious incidences that require the use of force can be upsetting to all concerned and may result in injuries to the pupil or to staff. Immediate action should be taken to provide first aid for any injuries and to access medical help for any injuries that go beyond first aid. It is also important that pupils are given emotional support.

Parents will be informed of each significant use of force as soon as practicable after the incident and include:

- the time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- a brief account of why the intervention was considered necessary
- a brief account of the type and degree of force applied
- details of any physical injuries sustained, where applicable

The requirement to report to parents applies even where the use of reasonable force or another restrictive intervention has been agreed with parents as part of a pupil's Positive Handling Plan or behaviour support plan.

If it is deemed necessary the parents will be invited in for a meeting to discuss the incident and to set out subsequent actions and support to avoid such an incident recurring. Parents should be involved in appropriate support arrangements. For parents of pupils whose behaviour is associated with SEN and/or disabilities, we will agree an individual positive handling plan (to be part of an IEP) if this is the first incident of this nature, and all concerned think there may be a repeat occurrence. School will also decide whether multi-agency partners need to be involved e.g. CAMHS.

Where reasonable the pupil should also be held to account for what has happened and the chance be given for that pupil to repair the harm that has been caused to any staff or pupil relationships. The pupil should also be offered opportunities to improve their social and/or emotional skills. In some cases an incident might lead to suspension or exclusion.

Complaints

What if I want to complain about the way the situation was handled and the force that was used against a pupil?

Parents have the right to complain about actions taken by school staff. If a specific allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff then we will follow the guidance set out in Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education documents.

Other complaints will be dealt with under our normal complaints procedure. In such circumstances the Head teacher/Deputy Head teacher would respond to the complaint in the light of this policy. Parents may then choose to appeal against this decision. At this point a

Governor's panel would be convened. The school policy and the degree to which it had been followed will be at the core of any investigation (see the complaints policy)

Physical Contact with Pupils Under Other Circumstances

Government guidance recognises that there will be some circumstances where physical contact with pupils may be necessary, such as:

- To demonstrate exercises or sports / PE techniques
- To demonstrate how to use a piece of equipment (e.g. IT or CDT)
- To give first aid
- To prompt or help young children or pupils with special educational needs / disability
- Touching may also be appropriate where a pupil is being congratulated or praised
- Touching may also be necessary where a pupil is in distress and needs comforting.
- Professional judgement must apply in all cases. The main factor is not about 'touching' per se but whether the touching is appropriate or inappropriate
- For some pupils touching may be a particularly sensitive issue EG: for cultural reasons or the child may have been abused
- Physical contact with pupils becomes increasing difficult as pupils reach or go through puberty

Links with Other Policies

- Behaviour and Bullying Policy
- Learning & Teaching policy
- Safeguarding policy
- Inclusion Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Complaints Policy

Appendix 1: Positive Handling Plan

Name:		Date Created:	
DOB:		Date for Review:	
		School Site:	
What are the triggers?			
When does the behaviour occur?			
Where does the behaviour occur?			
Strategies to be used prior to intervention			
Time out	Distraction	State alternatives/ consequences choices/limits	Praise partial compliance
Give a count	Reassure/success reminder	Named staff support	Repeat request
Talk calmly	Tactical ignoring	Remove stimulus	Other (please specify)
Preferred handling strategy			
Named additional adult called		Prompting (instruction elbow touch)	
Escorting (arm around back / hand on hand / no pressure)		Double Escort (2 members of staff)	
Seated Rest		Holding (2 people / arms across back)	
Other (please specify)		Other (please specify)	
De-briefing process following incident: What care is to be provided. space, talk through etc			
<u>Signatures</u>			
Child (Where appropriate) _____			
Parent/Guardian _____			
Headteacher/Deputy Head _____			



Appendix 2: Positive Handling Plan (SEND)

Positive Management Plan	
Contributors:	
Name :	Date:
Environment and triggers (describe the behaviour/ situations which cause / lead to difficulties)	
Prevention (describe any changes to routines, personnel or environment which might reduce the risk) Praise points/ Strengths	
Things that might help:	Things to avoid:

<u>Tier 1: What might happen</u>	<u>Tier 1: What to do</u> •
<u>Tier 2: What might happen</u>	<u>Tier 2: What to do</u>
<u>Tier 3: What might happen</u>	<u>Tier 3: What to do</u>
Cooling off/ Follow up:	