



Safer Handling / Physical Intervention Policy

Policy Leader	Head Teacher
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1. Purpose and Principles

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that any physical contact, handling or intervention (“safer handling” or “physical intervention”) used in our school is safe, proportionate, legally compliant, and in the best interests of the children. It aims to safeguard children’s rights, dignity and physical and emotional wellbeing, while ensuring staff know when and how intervention may lawfully and appropriately be used.

1.2 Guiding Principles

- The welfare of the child is paramount; any decision to use physical intervention must prioritise the child’s safety, dignity, and emotional wellbeing.
- Physical intervention is only one part of a wider behaviour-management and safeguarding framework (including de-escalation, environmental management, staff deployment, behaviour support plans, staff training, and risk assessment).
- Use of force or restraint must never be used as a punishment or disciplinary measure.
- Any use of physical intervention must be lawful, necessary and proportionate: the minimum force required for the shortest possible time.
- Alternative strategies (de-escalation, diversion, positive behaviour support, environmental changes) should always be considered and used where possible.
- Staff must treat all pupils with respect; special consideration must be given to pupils with additional vulnerabilities (e.g. SEND, medical needs, history of trauma), in line with equality and safeguarding duties.

New Section 1.3 Legal Framework

Staff have a legal power to use reasonable force under Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Reasonable force may be used to prevent a pupil from:

- causing injury to themselves or others;
- committing an offence;
- damaging property; or
- prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline within the school.

This policy operates alongside:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE);
- Behaviour in Schools Guidance;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children;
- Equality Act 2010;
- SEND Code of Practice;
- Health and Safety at Work legislation.

2. Definitions and Scope

2.1 Physical Contact vs Physical Intervention

- Some forms of physical contact may be appropriate and necessary in a primary school context: e.g. comforting a distressed child, supporting a younger child, assisting with toileting

or first aid, facilitating physical education, helping a child with additional needs, or physical prompts. These are *not* restrictive interventions when used appropriately.

- “Physical intervention” (or “restrictive physical intervention”) refers to acts where staff physically intervene to control or restrain a pupil’s movement — e.g. to prevent harm, injury to self/others, serious disruption, or damage to property.

2.2 When the Policy Applies

- All school staff (teaching, non-teaching, volunteers, supply staff) within the school’s setting — including in classrooms, playgrounds, sports hall, trips, off-site events.
- Not used routinely — only when required to protect safety, prevent injury/harm, or as a last resort following other behaviour management/de-escalation strategies.

3. When Safer Handling / Physical Intervention May Be Used

Staff may consider using physical intervention only if **all** of the following conditions are met:

- There is a real and significant risk of harm: to the pupil, to other pupils or staff, or to property.
- All other reasonable strategies to manage or de-escalate the situation have been attempted or considered (e.g. calm verbal control, diversion, removal of triggers, change of environment, positive behaviour support) — unless there is an immediate risk and no time for alternative approaches.
- The use of force is the minimum necessary to achieve safety — proportionate to the risk, and only for as long as needed.

Situations might include (but are not limited to):

- A pupil attacks or attempts to attack a member of staff or another pupil.
- A pupil is at serious risk of harming themselves.
- Significant disruption or disorder that puts safety at risk (e.g. fight, dangerous behaviour).

4. What Safer Handling Must / Must Not Involve (Safe Practice)

When physical intervention is employed, staff must adhere to the following guidelines:

Do:

- Tell the pupil what you are doing and why — use simple, clear and calm language.
- Use the minimum force necessary; use the least restrictive hold or strategy.
- Involve another member of staff if possible (to support, witness, safeguard).
- Try to re-establish verbal control, encouraging the pupil to regain self-control; relax the hold as soon as possible.
- Respect the child’s dignity and rights — consider their age, needs, background, any SEND or vulnerability.

Do Not:

- Use physical intervention as a form of punishment or discipline.
- Use excessive or disproportionate force, or hold in a way that restricts breathing, circulation — e.g. around neck, throat, torso/chest, abdomen, groin; avoid methods that apply pressure to joints, hyper-extend limbs, or force body into painful/uncomfortable positions.
- Twist limbs, pull hair, bend fingers, slap, punch, trip or kick.

- Continue physical intervention once the risk has subsided or the pupil is compliant.

The school does not use seclusion as a behavioural punishment. Planned withdrawal, supervised regulation spaces, or quiet areas may be used to support emotional regulation where appropriate and in accordance with individual pupil needs. Pupils must remain supervised and safeguarded at all times.

5. Staff Training, Induction and Risk Assessment

- All staff must receive appropriate training in safer handling / physical intervention — including legal framework, safe techniques, de-escalation, and risk awareness. Many schools use accredited programmes (e.g. “Team Teach”).
- No member of staff should be expected to use restrictive physical intervention without appropriate training (unless in an emergency and waiting for support).
- Where a pupil has SEND, neurodivergent needs, a disability, communication difficulties, SEMH needs, or a history of trauma, staff should consider whether behaviour may represent a form of communication or distress. Reasonable adjustments should be implemented and reviewed before considering restrictive intervention wherever possible.
- Any specific plans should detail: triggers, circumstances where intervention might be needed, preferred strategies (de-escalation), techniques agreed, who is authorised, how and when to review.
- Positive Handling Plans and risk assessments should identify any medical conditions which could increase risk during physical intervention, including asthma, epilepsy, cardiac conditions, respiratory difficulties, hypermobility, recent injuries or other relevant health needs.

6. Recording, Reporting, Monitoring, Review

- Every incident where physical intervention is used must be recorded on the school's approved recording system (CPOMS) as soon as possible and ideally before the member of staff leaves site that day. Records should include:
 - antecedents/triggers;
 - de-escalation strategies used;
 - staff involved;
 - witnesses;
 - type of intervention;
 - duration;
 - outcome;
 - injuries;
 - parent contact;
 - pupil voice;
 - follow-up actions.
- Parents or carers should normally be informed on the same day as the incident unless there are exceptional safeguarding reasons not to do so, in which case advice should be sought from the DSL.

- The school's senior leadership should regularly monitor the use of physical intervention (frequency, patterns, who is involved, whether appropriate, pupil/staff feedback), evaluate whether practices are safe and proportionate, and adjust policy or training as needed.
- Following any incident involving physical intervention, consideration must be given as to whether the incident indicates an underlying safeguarding concern, unmet need, medical issue, SEND need, mental health concern, trauma response, or risk of harm. Where appropriate, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should be informed and safeguarding procedures followed
- For pupils with individual handling plans: regularly review the plan (especially after any incident), and update as needed (e.g. if triggers change, child develops different coping strategies, or new support is needed).

6.1 Post-Incident Support

Following an incident, appropriate support should be provided to both the pupil and staff involved. This may include:

- restorative conversations;
- emotional regulation support;
- review of behaviour support plans;
- medical assessment where necessary;
- staff debriefing;
- safeguarding review by the DSL.

The purpose of the debrief is to learn from the incident, reduce future risk and support positive behaviour.

7. Integration with Wider Safeguarding and School Policies

This policy should be part of the school's wider safeguarding framework, in line with KCSIE's requirements that safeguarding permeates all school policies.

It should link closely with (or be cross-referenced by) the following policies, among others:

- Relational and Restorative Practice Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Supporting Pupils With Medical Conditions Policy
- SEND / Special Educational Needs policy (or inclusion policy)
- Intimate care policy
- First Aid policy
- Health & Safety policy / risk-assessment procedures
- Complaints policy (in case of concerns about handling)
- Staff code of conduct / safer working practice guidance for staff working with children.

8. Communication and Transparency

- The policy should be made available to all staff (including temporary or supply staff), volunteers, and governors.

- Parents/carers should be informed that the school has a safer handling / physical intervention policy (e.g. via the school handbook, website or induction pack).
- Where a pupil has an individual handling plan, that plan should be shared with relevant staff, and parents/carers should be consulted and agree before it is implemented.
- After any serious incident, the school should communicate with parents/carers about what happened, why, and what follow-up support or review will take place.

9. Review and Governance

- This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner following significant incidents, legislative changes, updated DfE guidance, safeguarding updates, or changes to the needs of the school community.
- The Headteacher will provide anonymised monitoring information to governors at least annually. Monitoring should include:
 - number of incidents;
 - pupils involved;
 - patterns and trends;
 - injuries;
 - training compliance;
 - outcomes of behaviour support interventions
- The school should ensure staff training is kept up to date, with refresher training as needed.