



# Huntington

## Community Primary School

### Physical Intervention and Safe Touch Policy

2026

*Date of Governing Board approval: 18/03/26*

*Next review date: Spring 2029*

Signed: 

Chair of Governors Date: 18/03/26

Signed: 

Headteacher Date: 18/03/26

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## **Statement of intent**

Huntington Community Primary School believes that it is important to establish a safe, secure and stable environment to enable pupils to grow, develop and learn. To achieve this, the school recognises that, in certain circumstances, physical intervention, including safe touch and the use of reasonable force, is necessary.

The school understands that behaviour is often a means of communication which may signal that a pupil is in need of support but does not know how to express this; therefore, the school takes a proactive approach to anticipating, managing and minimising potential triggers of distressed behaviour that may cause harm.

This policy acknowledges that situations may arise in which staff members will be required to use physical intervention, and in some cases reasonable force, in order to handle pupils' emotions or aggressive behaviour when other measures have failed to do so.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that physical intervention is used in a correct and safe manner, which is in accordance with the relevant legislation and national guidance.

## 1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 2011
- Children Act 1989
- Equality Act 2010
- DfE 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools'
- DfE 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education 2025'
- HM Government 'Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Low-level Concerns Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedures

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for:

- Monitoring the overall implementation of this policy.
- Notifying the headteacher that the Behaviour Policy should include the power to use reasonable force.
- Evaluating, on an annual basis, instances of physical intervention to analyse how and when reasonable force is used and identify any trends.
- Reviewing this policy on a three-yearly basis.
- Responding to any complaints, in liaison with the headteacher, from pupils or parents regarding the use of reasonable force.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Deciding whether members of staff require additional training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities, considering the needs of pupils.
- Ensuring all members of staff understand the correct conduct in terms of positive handling.
- Handling any allegations of abuse in line with the Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy.
- Maintaining the records of the use of reasonable force and evaluating on a termly basis how reasonable force and physical intervention is used.
- Ensuring that any member of staff who uses reasonable force completes the Physical Intervention Report Form (Appendix A).
- Ensuring that the Behaviour Policy sets out the circumstances in which force might be used.
- Responding to any complaints, in liaison with the governing board, from pupils or parents regarding the use of reasonable force.

- Carrying out risk assessments to ensure that staff who regularly work alongside pupils can use reasonable force and other restrictive interventions as safely as possible, if and when required.

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCo) is responsible for:

- Providing training to members of staff on how to handle the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Ensuring staff understand how pupils with SEND may react differently to reasonable force.
- Ensuring that staff understand the additional vulnerability of pupils with SEND or medical conditions.
- Developing individual risk assessments for pupils with SEND or medical conditions that are agreed with the pupil's parents, and ensuring teaching staff are aware of these.
- Ensuring that staff understand how reasonable force principles may need to be adapted for pupils with medical conditions.
- Evaluating on a termly basis how reasonable force and physical intervention is used with regard to pupils with SEND, in collaboration with the headteacher.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (currently the headteacher) is responsible for:

- Providing staff with annual reasonable force training (such as Team Teach) where the headteacher deems it necessary.
- Ensuring all members of staff use reasonable force in accordance with this policy.
- Reviewing this policy in liaison with the headteacher and governing board.

All staff members will be responsible for:

- Avoiding restrictive interventions wherever possible and only using reasonable force as a last resort.
- Only using reasonable force in certain circumstances, including to prevent or stop a pupil from:
  - Causing injury to themselves or others.
  - Committing a criminal offence.
  - Damaging property.
  - Causing disorder among pupils, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.
- Understanding the unacceptable uses of force and the legal implications of using force in this way.

### 3. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, '**physical intervention**' is used to refer to any situation in which physical contact with a pupil is necessary – this includes reasonable force (e.g. to defuse a situation in which a pupil is at risk of harming themselves or others) and safe touch (e.g. comforting a pupil in emotional distress).

For the purposes of this policy, '**positive handling**' is defined as the overall, graduated approach of responding to pupils' behaviour and emotions with the intention of protecting pupils and staff, and limiting damage to others and property. Positive handling adapts the least intrusive intervention techniques in response to situations, before using gentle physical intervention and reasonable force as a last resort.

For the purposes of this policy, '**reasonable force**' is considered to refer to a broad range of actions that may be used to control or restrain a pupil to prevent that pupil from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder. Reasonable force covers force that is necessary and proportionate to the circumstances.

There are two key types of reasonable force:

- **'Control'** – actions used in an attempt to direct a pupil's movements; this includes passive physical contact (e.g. standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path) and active physical contact (e.g. leading a pupil out of a classroom by their arm).
- **'Restraint'** – actions used in an attempt to physically bring a pupil under control. This type of force is typically used in more extreme circumstances (e.g. where two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate, causing staff to intervene to hold them back from one another physically).

For the purposes of this policy, **'safe touch'** is defined as physical contact which, if avoided, would be inhumane, unkind or cause distress to a pupil (e.g. where a pupil is significantly distressed and in need of physical comfort).

#### **4. Avoiding physical intervention and reducing risk**

The principle of positive handling means that the school expects staff to assess whether the incident requiring a response can be resolved without physical intervention.

Where possible, the school implements an approach of prevention, where staff will be trained in recognising warning signs of severe pain or distress and/or aggressive behaviour, communicating empathetically with pupils displaying such signs to aid them in regulating their emotions, and altering their environment to minimise distressing stimuli.

Teaching staff will be aware of the behavioural patterns, medical conditions and levels of need of pupils in their class, and will ensure that incidents of disruptive or aggressive behaviour in the classroom are handled in line with individual pupils' needs.

Staff will not generally resort to physical contact or reasonable force immediately without first questioning whether there is a need to use physical intervention. Staff will question whether:

- **It is necessary:**
  - Staff will consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation.
  - Staff will assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks, or whether its use would escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself.
  - Where possible, staff will communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.
- **It is proportionate:**
  - Staff will use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce relevant risks.
  - If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff will reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy.
  - Staff will consider the personal circumstances of the pupil, e.g. medical conditions, SEND or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics, e.g. age and size, and relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.

- **The pupil's welfare:**
  - Staff will consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken.
  - Staff will maintain respect for a pupil's dignity.
  - Where possible, staff will clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and explain what the pupil needs to do.
  - For pupils with communication difficulties or EAL, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies will be used to ensure the pupil understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.
  - Staff will seek to understand the pupil's feelings and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

Reasonable force will only be used in situations where it is needed to stop a pupil from causing harm to themselves or others, committing a criminal offence, damaging property, or causing disorder among pupils. Any reasonable force used in situations that are non-urgent will only be used once all alternative options have been exhausted and where the staff member in charge deems that the situation is escalating.

The school understands that, in some cases, action may be required very quickly (e.g. in the event that a pupil attempts to run out into a busy road, or where pupils begin a violent fight with one another and staff are forced to pull the pupils apart). Staff will not be penalised for resorting to the use of physical intervention or reasonable force in such situations where it is justified and perceived necessary to prevent harm to others or property in the circumstances.

Positive handling will be applied with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the pupil to regain self-control. Reasonable force is not used as a method of behaviour management or discipline – only as a last resort in situations that require de-escalation to prevent harm.

## **5. Seclusion**

The school will recognise seclusion as a non-disciplinary measure that may be used, in exceptional circumstances, to reduce risk and avoid the need for physical intervention when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation and is not acting with intent.

The school will ensure that seclusion is used only as a safety measure to protect the pupil or others from harm and will not use seclusion as a consequence or through the threat of punishment.

Where seclusion is used, the school will ensure that:

- The space used will be safe, suitable, and not intimidating or threatening to the pupil.
- The pupil will be appropriately supervised at all times.
- The restriction will last only for as long as the immediate risk of harm remains.
- The pupil will be allowed to leave as soon as it is safe to do so.

The school will record and report any incident involving seclusion in accordance with the procedures set out in the recording and reporting incidents section of this policy.

Seclusion will not be used as a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. The school will use appropriate disciplinary measures, such as removal from the classroom, in line with the Behaviour Policy.

## **6. Pupils with SEND**

The school will have due consideration to how pupils with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Staff members will be trained on understanding triggers and how pupils that find communication challenging may express their needs, discomfort or confusion through actions.

The school will seek to minimise the potential disproportionate use of restrictive interventions used on pupils with SEND by understanding underlying triggers of challenging behaviour and providing proactive support.

The SENDCo will ensure that the stipulations of the Equality Act 2010 are adhered to in relation to reasonable adjustments, non-discrimination and the Public Sector Equality Duty, and will ensure that staff that come into regular contact with pupils with SEND are aware of the ways in which their needs can be met without reasonable force.

The school will utilise staff who know individual pupils well to help identify and manage risk, such as trigger points when challenging behaviour is more likely to occur, and develop proactive strategies to reduce the likelihood of restrictive interventions being used. The school will also work with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

De-escalation strategies may include:

- Removing stimuli that may be causing distress.
- Changing body language, facial expression, or tone of voice.
- Supporting the pupil to express their emotions before they become overwhelmed.
- Engaging the pupil in an activity which can help them manage their feelings of anxiety.
- Distracting the pupil in something that interests them or by introducing familiar objects and activities to redirect their attention.

Staff members will not assume that a technique employed for one pupil with SEND will be applicable to other pupils with SEND.

Where appropriate, staff will work with pupils with SEND and their parents in the co-production of behaviour support plans. These plans will outline any adjustments and methods to communicate their needs effectively. Behaviour support plans will also detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil. Any behaviour support plan will be reviewed with the pupil and their parent periodically and following any significant incident.

Where there is an identified risk, e.g. an increased likelihood in the need to use reasonable force and other physical interventions, the school will put risk assessments in place and mitigate these risks through training and prevention strategies.

The school will adhere to its Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy at all times.

## **7. Post-incident support**

The school will evaluate all incidents involving the use of restrictive intervention as soon as practicable after the event to understand why it was used, the impact on pupils and staff, any patterns and trends, and how the use of restrictive interventions might be avoided in the future.

If appropriate, the pupil and staff member involved will receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible

Follow-up conversations will be used to facilitate reflection, learning and to support pupil and staff wellbeing. Such conversations will be framed as part of the overall debriefing process and seek to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from both the staff and pupils involved. This process will be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident, with input from an additional person to ensure impartiality and support.

The school will continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed. Additionally, any pupil who witnesses an incident of restrictive intervention will also be provided with appropriate support where necessary.

## **8. Recording and Reporting incidents**

The governing board will ensure that a procedure is in place for recording and reporting each significant event in which a staff member uses force on a pupil.

Incidents will be recorded as soon as practicable after the event. It will be recorded by the staff members involved and they will aim to do this no later than the same day. The requirement to record will apply even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

The school will record the following details as a minimum:

- Names of pupils and staff directly involved.
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has SEND, and their SEN status code.
- The time, date, location, and approximate duration of the intervention.
- A brief account of the incident, including what led up to the incident, identified or potential triggers if known, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used, and what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of any physical injuries sustained.
- A brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance.
- Any post-incident support, e.g. details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts.

The school may also record details such as witness accounts, how and when parents were notified, and what follow-up action has taken place.

Records should be retained and analysed by the headteacher, and SENDCo where physical intervention was used on a pupil with SEND, on a termly basis to ensure that such interventions are being used appropriately, and to identify patterns of behaviour and responses to that behaviour that may require

changes to school practice (e.g. increased staff training or further behavioural or emotional support). Records should also be sent to the governing board annually for evaluation.

Where reasonable force or physical restraint has been used, the pupil's parents will be informed unless it appears that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. If the decision is made that the parents cannot be informed as this would place the child at greater risk, a safeguarding referral will be made in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

A report of the incident made to parents will include the following details as a minimum:

- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention.
- A brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary.
- A brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force.
- The details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable.

Parents will also be invited to have a follow-up discussion about the incident where appropriate. This may include a discussion about:

- Behavioural triggers or warning signs of an impending incident.
- Whether any agreed behaviour support plans were followed.
- What de-escalation strategies were used and how effective they were.
- What might be done differently in the future.

The headteacher will be responsible for conducting a thorough investigation to find out the correct details of what occurred; this may include talking to other pupils about the incident, for instance those who witnessed the event.

### **Recording and reporting the use of seclusion and non-force related restraint**

The governing board will ensure that a procedure is also in place for recording and reporting any incident involving seclusion or non-physical restrictive intervention, whether or not physical force has been used. This duty applies even where such interventions are agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

Incidents involving seclusion or non-physical restrictive intervention will be recorded as soon as practicable after the event by the staff members involved and, wherever possible, no later than the same day.

For the purposes of this policy, non-physical restrictive interventions include actions that restrict a pupil's movement without direct physical contact, such as preventing a pupil from leaving a space or removing an item that enables mobility.

The school will record the following details as a minimum:

- Names of the pupil and staff directly involved.
- The time, date, location, and approximate duration of the intervention.
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including SEND where applicable.
- A brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance.
- Any post-incident support provided, including medical or emotional support where relevant.

Parents will be informed of incidents involving seclusion or non-physical restrictive intervention as soon as practicable, and no later than the same day, unless it appears that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. Where parents cannot be informed for this reason, the incident will be reported to the local authority.

Where an incident involving seclusion or non-physical restrictive intervention also constitutes a significant use of force, the school will follow the reporting procedure for significant use of force only, and information will not be duplicated.

Records of seclusion and non-physical restrictive interventions will be retained, monitored, and reviewed alongside records of physical intervention to support oversight, identify patterns or trends, and inform any necessary changes to school practice or pupil support.

## 9. Complaints

Any complaints regarding the use of restrictive interventions will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.

If an allegation regarding inappropriate use of force or other restrictive interventions is made against a staff member, the procedures in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* will be followed, including the provisions regarding suspension of staff.

## 10. Safe touch

Staff should ensure that safe touch only occurs in the presence of other adults or children, and that it does not indicate favour towards particular pupils.

The school understands that the following examples are instances of safe touch which may occur between staff and pupils:

- Comforting an upset or distressed pupil
- Congratulating or praising a pupil
- Holding the hand of a pupil to guide them, such as when crossing a road or walking to assembly
- Giving first aid to a pupil
- Demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons
- Administering medicine
- Using musical instruments

The school understands that certain types of physical contact between staff and pupils are inappropriate, e.g. cuddling, lap-sitting and some instances of holding hands, and that safe touch should never be invasive, humiliating or flirtatious.

Pupils should not be touched between the waist and mid-thigh, or on/near the chest (unless specifically required during a First Aid procedure or Team Teach physical intervention).

The school places the following restrictions on **hugging**. Staff employing touch for reward or comfort will use the 'school hug', rather than an embrace. The school hug is a sideways hug whereby the member of staff places their hands on the pupil's shoulders. This type of hug prevents the pupil from turning

themselves towards the member of staff and thus engaging in a 'front' embrace, which the school deems inappropriate.

**Lap-sitting** is inappropriate and prohibited.

A child may only **sit on an adult's knee** for a short period and a specific purpose (e.g. for First Aid) – they should not sit too close to the body.

For pupils within the **Early Years Foundation Stage**, it may be more appropriate on occasion for closer physical contact, while appropriate child-adult relationships are being established. The points above still apply, however, except that sitting on the knee and shoulder-hugs might occur more regularly and be of longer duration, if such support is required by the child.

The school recognises that staff will sometimes need to hold a pupil's hand (e.g. to guide them or prevent them from physical harm). This should be for the minimum amount of time required for such guidance.

The school understands that pupils are not always aware of the boundaries between staff and pupils and thus may try to engage in physical contact, such as lap-sitting or inappropriate hand-holding and hugging. Should a pupil try to engage in any inappropriate physical contact, the member of staff will explain to the pupil why it is unacceptable and encourage them to engage in the school-hug instead.

If a member of staff attempts to use one of the safe methods of touch and a pupil is unhappy or uncomfortable with this, the member of staff will retract immediately in order to respect the pupil's wishes.

Appropriate touch involving pupils with SEND will be in line with their EHC plan or IHP.

For intimate care (especially toileting), see the school's *Intimate Care Policy*,

Where it is reported that a staff member has engaged, or is suspected to have engaged, in touch that is not appropriate in line with this policy and the Staff Code of Conduct, this will be handled in line with the Low-level Concerns Policy, or, where there have been multiple reports of inappropriate touch or an instance of touch which is severely inappropriate, the Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy.

## **11. Support for children reluctant to enter the school**

Some children, especially the very young and those with SEND, may experience anxiety about attending school. On occasion this may manifest itself as upset on entry to the school itself.

Staff will take a lead from parents/carers in such circumstances. They may, with parental permission, provide physical comfort while verbally encouraging a child's entry, for the minimal time felt necessary (e.g. holding a hand, providing a school hug).

Staff in the EYFS may, with parental permission, provide physical assistance to parents/carers in such circumstances. If an EYFS pupil is upset on entry, their parent/carer should be asked to wait until all other children have come into the classroom, then bring their child to the threshold. If, after verbal encouragement, the child remains reluctant to enter the classroom, a member of EYFS staff may, with parental permission and in the presence of another staff member, accept the child into their arms from the parent/carer and take them into the classroom, if they feel confident to do so. Safe touch for comfort (see section 10) may be offered by staff to ease the child's entry.

Physical assistance (e.g. control or restraint) will not be provided to children in year groups other than the EYFS to facilitate their entry to school, even if requested by parents/carers. Physical comfort may, however, be offered by staff in such circumstances.

## **12. Monitoring and review**

This policy will be reviewed on a three-yearly basis by the headteacher, DSL, SENDCo and Governing Board, who will consider any necessary changes and communicate the findings of the review to all members of staff.

The next scheduled review for this policy is Spring 2029.

## Appendix A: Physical Intervention Report Form

We believe that reasonable force should only be used when absolutely necessary. With this in mind, this form has been created to ensure that all incidents of this type are recorded. Incidents must also be documented in the Physical Intervention Log.

<b>Name of staff member:</b>	
<b>Name of pupil:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Time:</b>	
<b>Location:</b>	
<b>Name(s) of staff member(s) who witnessed the incident:</b>	
<b>Informed parties (parents, social workers, police, etc.):</b>	
<b>Circumstances prior to the incident:</b>	
<b>Details of the incident:</b>	
<b>Details of any negative impact on other pupils:</b>	

**Reason(s) for physical intervention (please tick):**

To prevent a pupil from causing injury to themselves or others.	<input type="checkbox"/>
To prevent a pupil from committing a criminal offence.	<input type="checkbox"/>
To prevent a pupil from damaging property.	<input type="checkbox"/>
To prevent a pupil from causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Was it a planned intervention, e.g. in line with approved strategies for the behaviour of specific pupils? Please circle.</b>	Yes/No

**Brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary:**

**Any post-incident support required:**

**Injuries (if any) to staff members, the pupil concerned or other pupils:**

**Damage (if any) to property:**

**Recommendation(s) to avoid future incidents:**

**Headteacher's signature:**

**Date:**

**Signature of staff member concerned:**

**Date:**

