

Love, Live and Learn

Our Lady & St. Swithin's



Catholic Primary School

Physical Intervention Policy 2026/2027

Headteacher: _____

Chair of Governors: _____

Date: _____

As a Catholic Community centred on God's love, respecting all, we are committed to enable and encourage each person to be cared for in body, mind and spirit ensuring everyone achieves their full potential in a secure and caring environment.

DREAMS

"Dream, Believe, achieve"

Discover

Resilience

Embrace

Aspire

Make a difference

Service

1. Purpose and principles

Our Lady and St Swithin's Catholic Primary School is committed to providing a safe, calm, inclusive and respectful environment in which pupils can learn and flourish. Positive relationships, predictable routines, early support and de-escalation are the first response to distress or behaviour that may place someone at risk. Physical intervention is not a behaviour-management shortcut or a punishment.

The purpose of this policy is to explain when reasonable force or another restrictive intervention may lawfully be used, how the school will minimise the need for it, and the safeguards for pupils, staff and families. Any intervention must be necessary in the circumstances, proportionate to the risk, the least restrictive option available and used for the shortest time required.

The school will protect pupils' dignity, rights, welfare and safety, and will consider the impact of age, disability, SEND, communication needs, medical conditions, trauma, sensory needs and other vulnerabilities. An individual plan does not create a blanket permission to restrain a pupil: every incident must be judged on its circumstances.

2. Scope and legal framework

This policy applies across the school day and school activities, including lessons, corridors, playgrounds, trips and other school-supervised activities. It should be read alongside the school's behaviour and safeguarding policies.

The principal current DfE source is Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026), which replaced the 2013 guidance from 1 April 2026. Relevant legislation includes the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (including sections 93 and 93A), the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and health and safety legislation. This policy is intended to be consistent with that guidance; it is not a substitute for the law or case-specific legal advice. The school will review it when legislation or DfE guidance changes.

3. Definitions

Reasonable force

Reasonable force is the use of no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time in the circumstances. It may include physical contact or other actions that restrict movement. The legal power is available to all members of school staff in limited circumstances; this does not mean every staff member is trained to use a physical technique.

Restrictive intervention

A physical or non-physical action intended to prevent, restrict or subdue a pupil's movement, including restraint and seclusion as defined below.

Restraint

A non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. It may or may not involve direct physical contact. The DfE guidance gives removal of a pupil's walking aid as an example of restraint without direct physical contact.

Seclusion

Keeping a pupil confined in a place away from others and preventing them from leaving by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave. Seclusion is not a sanction or punishment. Its use is subject to strict safeguards and statutory recording/reporting requirements.

Significant incident involving force

An incident in which staff use force beyond appropriate physical contact, including where force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention. The school must record and report significant incidents in line with the statutory DfE guidance.

4. When reasonable force may be used

Staff may use reasonable force only where necessary to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- causing injury to themselves or another person;
- committing a criminal offence;
- damaging property; or
- causing disorder among pupils at school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Before acting, where time and circumstances allow, staff should consider whether a less restrictive response would manage the risk effectively. They should assess whether intervention is likely to reduce the risk or may escalate the situation or cause greater harm. Immediate action may be necessary where there is an imminent risk of injury.

Reasonable force must never be used to punish, humiliate, intimidate, secure compliance for its own sake, or because a pupil is refusing an instruction where none of the lawful circumstances above applies. It must not be used as a routine response to low-level disruption, rudeness, non-compliance or distress.

The decision to intervene remains dependent on the circumstances at the time. The existence of an individual behaviour support plan, parental agreement or prior training does not automatically make force necessary or lawful.

5. Prevention and de-escalation

The school will actively minimise the need for restrictive interventions through a whole-school approach that builds trusting relationships, predictable routines, inclusive environments and effective communication. Staff should seek to understand what the pupil's behaviour may be communicating and address likely triggers.

LeAFE de-escalation principles adopted by the school

- Keep listening and allow the pupil time to be heard and to process information.
- Pause before speaking again; where appropriate, count to ten, use a calm gesture or allow processing time.
- Observe body language, the environment and potential hazards; remain alert to possible weapons or objects that could cause harm.
- Monitor anxiety and implement strategies to reduce it.
- Know the pupil's background, communication profile and relevant history, and use this to establish a baseline for support.
- Communicate at a level the pupil understands before, during and after an incident; use visual, non-verbal or augmentative communication where appropriate.
- Assess the situation and offer realistic, achievable choices.
- Reassure the pupil where possible; keep tone of voice calm and consider facial expression, eye contact, posture, gestures and personal space.
- Use minimal language and one voice at a time; avoid several adults speaking at once.
- Where helpful and safe, invite a trusted adult or someone with a stronger relationship or greater knowledge of the pupil to support de-escalation.

These points are drawn from the supplied document LeAFE De-escalate (LeAFE Training Ltd., 2023) and are consistent with the DfE emphasis on communication, empathy, time and space, understanding triggers and prevention.

Practical prevention measures

- Reduce noise, crowding or other sensory stimuli where these may be contributing to distress.
- Give clear, short instructions and adequate processing time; avoid confrontational language and unnecessary demands during escalation.
- Offer a safe, supervised opportunity to move to a calm space voluntarily, or engage in a familiar regulating activity.
- Move other pupils away from danger where this can be done safely, and call for assistance using the school's agreed procedure.
- Use individual behaviour support plans, reasonable adjustments and risk assessments where a pupil's needs or circumstances indicate these are required.

6. Decision-making and safeguards

When deciding whether an intervention is appropriate, staff must consider:

- Necessity: is intervention needed to address one of the lawful risks in section 4, and are less restrictive alternatives likely to work?
- Proportionality: what is the minimum intervention and minimum duration required to reduce the risk?
- Effectiveness and escalation: is the intervention reducing risk, or is it increasing distress or danger? If it is escalating the situation, staff should reassess and change approach where safe.
- Pupil welfare and dignity: consider age, size, disability, SEND, medical needs, sensory impairment, communication needs, trauma, anxiety and other vulnerabilities.
- Communication: calmly explain what is happening and what the pupil needs to do, using language, visuals or non-verbal communication the pupil can understand.
- Environment: consider the location, the presence of peers and the safest way to protect everyone involved.

Staff should stop the intervention as soon as the risk that justified it has reduced sufficiently. A pupil's behaviour support plan can guide prevention and risk management, but cannot replace this real-time assessment.

7. Safety: prohibited and high-risk practice

- Force must never be used for punishment.
- Staff must not use an intervention that restricts or compromises the pupil's airway, breathing or circulation. Do not cover the mouth or nose or apply pressure to the neck or abdomen.
- Ground restraint carries particular risks and must be avoided. If a pupil is unintentionally on the ground, staff should release or reposition to a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible, consistent with immediate safety and their training.
- Staff must not improvise, teach or use physical techniques for which they have not received suitable training. Where staff are not trained in a particular technique, they must still act lawfully to protect people from immediate harm, using the safest reasonable response available and summoning trained assistance.
- Do not use seclusion as a punishment, threat or consequence for deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. A supervised calm space that a pupil can leave voluntarily is not seclusion.
- Do not use force solely to make a pupil follow instructions, to protect adult authority, or because staffing or time pressures make another response inconvenient.

If an injury, breathing concern, loss of consciousness or other medical concern occurs, summon emergency assistance and provide first aid/medical assessment without delay. Record and report injuries in accordance with school procedures and health and safety requirements.

8. Seclusion and removal from class

Seclusion, as defined in section 3, is a highly restrictive safety measure and is not a routine option for this school. Under DfE guidance it should only be used to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation, where the pupil is not acting with intent. The place must be safe and not threatening or intimidating, the pupil must be supervised at all times, and the pupil must be allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced.

Any incident of seclusion must be recorded and reported under the applicable statutory procedures, even where it was included in an individual plan. A disciplinary removal from a classroom is different from seclusion only where the pupil is not confined or prevented from leaving. Staff must not block a pupil's exit or threaten punishment if they try to leave in a way that turns a removal into seclusion.

9. Pupils with SEND, disabilities or other vulnerabilities

The school recognises that distress or behaviour that presents risk may be associated with pain, sensory overload, communication barriers, unfamiliar environments, anxiety or unmet needs. Staff must not assume that behaviour is deliberate without considering context and communication.

- Work with the pupil, parents/carers and relevant professionals to understand triggers and identify preventative strategies.
- Make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 and consider the pupil's individual communication, sensory, medical and mobility needs.
- Where risk is identified, maintain a written risk assessment and, where appropriate, an individual behaviour support plan that sets out triggers, early warning signs, de-escalation strategies, reasonable adjustments, staff roles, emergency arrangements and post-incident support.
- Any plan that discusses increased physical contact must specify the circumstances and boundaries, be developed with relevant people and be reviewed periodically and after a significant incident.
- Share relevant information with staff who need it to keep the pupil and others safe, in line with safeguarding and data-protection requirements.

10. Staff training and responsibilities

All staff must be familiar with this policy, the school's behaviour and safeguarding procedures, the de-escalation approach and how to summon help. Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions should receive appropriate training in safe and lawful use, alongside preventative and de-escalation strategies. Leaders will determine training needs through risk assessment and the school's individual context. Only staff who have received suitable training may use trained physical techniques, and only within the limits of their training. Training does not remove the duty to assess necessity, proportionality, pupil welfare and the circumstances of each incident.

- All staff: prioritise prevention, communicate calmly, protect pupils from immediate danger and report incidents promptly.
- Headteacher / designated senior leader: lead the response, ensure records and parent notifications are completed, arrange follow-up, and review plans and risk assessments.
- Behaviour and Inclusion Lead / SENCo / relevant pastoral staff: contribute to analysis of triggers, reasonable adjustments, behaviour support plans and staff guidance, as appropriate.
- Governing Body / Trust Board: ensure suitable procedures exist and regularly review data and compliance, including patterns and potential disproportionate use for pupils with SEND or protected characteristics.

11. Recording and reporting: mandatory procedures

The school will record and report each significant incident involving the use of force, and each incident of seclusion or restraint, in accordance with the DfE guidance effective from April 2026 and the applicable regulations. Recording and reporting are required even where an intervention is described in a behaviour support plan or agreed with parents.

Recording

The staff member(s) involved must make a written record as soon as practicable and should endeavour to complete it no later than the same day. The record must include, as a minimum:

- pupil's name and the names of staff directly involved;
- relevant needs or circumstances, including identified SEND/disability and SEN status code where applicable;
- date, time, location and approximate duration;
- what happened before and during the incident, known or possible triggers and de-escalation/prevention strategies used;
- why the intervention was considered necessary, and for force incidents the type and degree of force applied;
- any physical injuries and any post-incident support or medical treatment.

The school should also record witness/pupil accounts where appropriate, when and how parents were informed, follow-up conversations and actions to prevent recurrence. Store records securely and share them only with those who need access.

Informing parents/carers

Parents/carers must be informed as soon as practicable after each significant use of force and each seclusion or restraint incident; the school should endeavour to do this no later than the same day. Information should normally be provided in writing. For significant force incidents, the report must include the time, date, location and approximate duration, why force was necessary, the type and degree of force, and any injuries. For seclusion/restraint, follow the applicable statutory procedure, including providing a copy of the written record where required for the school's status. The DfE guidance identifies limited exceptions where informing a parent would be likely to cause serious harm to the pupil, or where the pupil is aged 20 or over. In a serious-harm concern, the staff member must report to any parent who can be informed safely or, if there is none, to the local authority where the pupil ordinarily resides. The designated senior leader must promptly ensure the correct statutory route is followed and document the rationale.

Incident response checklist

1. Make the situation safe; summon assistance and arrange first aid/medical assessment if needed.
2. Inform the headteacher or designated senior leader as soon as possible.
3. Complete the required incident record promptly, ideally the same day.
4. Ensure parent/carer notification is made as soon as practicable, aiming for the same day, and record how/when it was done.
5. Record and report injuries through the school's health and safety procedures as appropriate.
6. Arrange debrief, pupil and staff support, and review the pupil's risk assessment/behaviour support plan.

12. Recovery, debrief and support

Once everyone is safe, staff should allow the pupil time to recover and avoid an immediate punitive or interrogative response. As soon as practicable, the school will review the incident to understand what happened, why intervention was used, the impact on pupil and staff, whether the plan was followed and what could reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Where appropriate, a follow-up conversation should be offered to the pupil and staff involved. Ideally, a person not involved in the incident facilitates the debrief to support impartiality. The process should promote reflection, learning, relationship repair and wellbeing, not blame. Witnesses who may have been distressed should also receive support where needed. Injuries or adverse effects must be assessed and treated promptly.

13. Complaints, allegations and safeguarding

Complaints about restrictive intervention will be handled under the school's Complaints Procedure. Any allegation of inappropriate force or other restrictive intervention against a staff member must be managed under the school's safeguarding procedures and the current Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance, including referral to the designated safeguarding lead and relevant external agencies where required. Records must be factual, timely and securely retained. Staff must not discourage a pupil or parent from raising a concern.

14. Monitoring, governance and continuous improvement

The headteacher and governing body/trust board will review incident records regularly to identify triggers, repeated patterns, effectiveness of de-escalation, training needs, changes needed to the environment or support plans, and any disproportionate use involving pupils with SEND, disabilities or other protected characteristics. Analysis should be proportionate and avoid over-interpreting small numbers.

- Review each incident as soon as practicable and amend plans where evidence indicates this is needed.
- Use aggregated information to inform staff training, supervision, policy review and prevention planning.
- Check that recording, parent notification, follow-up and safeguarding procedures are completed.
- Review this policy at least annually and sooner if legislation, DfE guidance, school practice or learning from incidents indicates a change is required.

15. Cross-reference to supplied LeAFE materials and DfE guidance

Source	Key content used	Where reflected in this policy
LeAFE De-escalate (LeAFE Training Ltd., 2023)	Listening, pause/count to ten, observation, anxiety monitoring, pupil history, accessible communication, choices, reassurance, tone/body language, personal space, trusted adult, minimal language and one voice.	Sections 5 and 6
LeAFE Restrictive Hold 2026 Update (file title; handout heading: "LeAFE DfE Restrictive Update", © LeAFE Training Ltd. 2023)	Legal power for staff to use reasonable force in limited circumstances; four purposes; definitions of restrictive intervention, reasonable force and seclusion; seclusion not as punishment.	Sections 3, 4 and 8; updated and expanded to reflect current DfE guidance
DfE, Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026)	Necessity and proportionality; SEND considerations; prohibited practices; training and risk assessment; recording/reporting; debrief and governance.	Throughout, especially Sections 6–14

Source note: the LeAFE handouts are training materials, not legislation or a substitute for current statutory guidance. Where their brief wording does not cover a safeguard or later legal requirement, this policy follows the DfE guidance effective from 1 April 2026.

16. Official guidance and related sources

Department for Education (April 2026), Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools:

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

Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care (2019), Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-the-need-for-restraint-and-restrictive-intervention>

The school should also consult the current Behaviour in Schools guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, Equality Act 2010: advice for schools, and relevant health and safety guidance.