




Pennine Academies Yorkshire

Physical Intervention Policy

POLICY HISTORY

Version: V2
Date written: January 2022
Review date: January 2024
Ratified by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER January 2024

Approved by (signature): 

Date issued: January 2024
Responsibility of: TRUST
Review period: 2 years
Date to be reviewed: January 2026

Upload to academy website : NO

KEY AMENDMENTS TO THIS POLICY

December 2023

This policy has been completely redrafted using a template model policy from The Key by the Trust Strategic Inclusion Manager.

It has been converted to the new Trust policy format and all links to legislation and guidance have been checked.

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1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

Pennine Academies Yorkshire 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/Trust recognises that, in certain circumstances, physical intervention, including safe touch and the use of reasonable force, is necessary.

The school/Trust 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/Trust 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.

2. 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](#)

This policy operates in conjunction with the following statutory and non-statutory guidance:

- [Use of reasonable force in school/Trusts](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education](#)
- [Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention](#)

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school/Trust policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour/Relationship Policy
- Managing Allegations Against Staff and Low Level Concerns Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedures
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

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, or 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. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Trust board and/or executive team is responsible for:

- Monitoring the overall implementation of this policy.
- Notifying the headteacher that the Behaviour/Relationship 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 an annual 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 Managing Allegations Against Staff and Low Level Concerns Policy.
- Maintaining the records of the use of reasonable force and evaluating on a termly basis how reasonable force and physical intervention are used.
- Ensuring that any member of staff who uses reasonable force completes the [Physical Intervention Report Form](#).
- Ensuring that the Behaviour/Relationship Policy sets out the circumstances in which force might be used.
- Responding to any complaints, in liaison with the trust board, from pupils or parents regarding the use of reasonable force.

The SENDCo is responsible for:

- Ensuring members of staff are trained 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 DSL is responsible for:

- Ensuring staff receive reasonable force training where the headteacher deems it necessary, and that this is kept up-to-date.

5. POSITIVE HANDLING

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

Where possible, the school/Trust implements an approach of prevention, where staff will be trained in recognising signs of 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. For example;

- Verbal de-escalation can be attempted.
- There are actions that can be taken to remove triggers from pupils, e.g. dimming the lights and utilising quiet spaces in the classroom/school/Trust

- The pupil can be removed from the situation without physical intervention, e.g. if they will follow a member of teaching staff out of the classroom.
- The pupil has a condition or support needs that mean physical intervention would be inherently more dangerous, e.g. asthma which may be made worse by restrictive holds or sensory issues where physical touch would contribute to sensory overload and may provoke aggressive behaviour.
- They have the ability, training and adequate support to physically intervene safely without causing unnecessary harm to the pupil or themselves.

The school/Trust 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 used as a last resort in situations that require de-escalation to prevent harm.

6. REASONABLE FORCE

Staff members will use actions that are appropriate and in proportion to the circumstances. Where reasonable force is required, the degree and type of force that is used will depend on the pupil's circumstances, e.g. their age or SEND. The following list is not exhaustive, but provides examples of situations where the school/Trust may decide to use reasonable force where other methods of defusing a situation have been exhausted or are not appropriate:

- Members of staff need to control pupils risking the safety of themselves or others outside of school/Trust premises where the same range of support options are not available, e.g. on school/Trust trips.
- Members of staff must prevent a pupil from leaving an area, e.g. the classroom or school/Trust grounds, where doing so would risk their safety or the safety of others.
- A pupil is attacking a member of staff or another pupil.

- A pupil is at serious risk of harming themselves and a member of staff must intervene to prevent this.
- Disruptive children must be removed from the classroom and are refusing instructions to leave.
- The headteacher or authorised staff are conducting a search for items prohibited under the Education Act 1996, e.g. knives and weapons, alcohol, and illegal drugs.

All members of staff will be permitted to use reasonable force where they believe it to be appropriate in line with their training, as long as all necessary precautions are taken. The decision to physically intervene during a situation is down to the professional judgement of the member of staff and always depends on the circumstances and the pupil's individual needs.

7. PUPILS WITH SEND

The school/Trust will have due consideration to the risks posed by the additional vulnerability of pupils with SEND in terms of physical intervention and reasonable force.

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.

The school/Trust is aware that pupils with SEND may sometimes experience heightened emotions, which can sometimes manifest in behaviour which may be aggressive or seem uncontrollable. Where this is known, the SENDCO and headteacher will draft a risk assessment to determine planned strategies for managing the pupil's crises that are tailored to the pupil's specific needs, to avoid the use of reasonable force. These risk assessments will be conducted in collaboration with the pupil and their parents, where appropriate.

Some pupils with SEND may require physical intervention when they feel overwhelmed or stressed as a mechanism of support. This will be discussed as part of relevant risk assessments.

Staff will also be aware that pupils with SEND may engage in frequent, repetitive self-stimulatory behaviour, known as 'stimming', and that some pupils may engage

in self-injurious stimming, e.g. repeatedly hitting or scratching themselves. While this can be alarming, staff will be aware that stimming is often carried out as a means of emotional regulation or self-soothing in response to stressful or overwhelming stimuli. Staff members will aim to remove distressing stimuli from the environment, where possible, or will support pupils to engage in less harmful stimming methods.

Staff will be aware that restraining a pupil in a way that prevents them from stimming entirely can cause extreme distress and lead to further aggressive behaviour. Self-injurious stimming and tactics to support a pupil to engage in safer stims will be included as part of the pupil's risk assessment.

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

8. POST-INCIDENT SUPPORT

Following an incident of reasonable force, all pupils and staff members involved will be given any necessary first aid to treat injuries as soon as possible, and emotional support.

Wherever reasonable force is used, staff members and pupils involved in incidents will be given separate opportunities to reflect on what happened.

It will be explained to the pupil involved the reason that such intervention was used, and reassured that the use of the intervention was not a punishment for their behaviour, but rather a method of defusing the situation and preventing them from harming themselves or others.

Staff will be encouraged to reflect on their actions and how they handled the situation, and will be reassured, where appropriate, that they have done nothing wrong and acted in what they perceived to be the best interests of pupils.

9. REPORTING INCIDENTS

A written report will be kept of **all** incidents where reasonable force is used, distinguishing between planned interventions, i.e. those in line with approved strategies for the behaviour of specific pupils, and unplanned or emergency interventions and this will be available on CPOMs.

Immediately following an incident, the member(s) of staff involved will verbally report the incident to the headteacher and provide a comprehensive written record of the situation as soon as possible, using the [Physical Intervention Report Form](#). The written report of the incident must be thorough, including as much detail as possible as to what had happened before, during and after the incident, the reasons why specific interventions were employed, and any injuries incurred due to the incident.

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/Trust practice, e.g. increased staff training or further behavioural or emotional support. Records should also be sent to the executive team/trust board for evaluation.

Staff members who do not record an instance of reasonable force where it has occurred may be disciplined in line with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.

Where reasonable force or physical restraint has been used, the pupil's parents will be informed.

Any allegations against staff will be dealt with as a matter of urgency, and in accordance with the procedures outlined in the school/Trust's Managing Allegations Against Staff and Low Level Concerns Policy.

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.

10. COMPLAINTS

All members of staff will be made fully aware of the consequences and legal retributions that can occur following the incorrect use of physical intervention and force.

All complaints regarding the use of physical intervention or force will be investigated in a thorough and speedy manner. The person making the complaint is responsible for providing evidence for their allegations, e.g. testimony of events or evidence of injury – it is not for the member of staff to prove that their actions were made reasonably.

In extreme circumstances, parents may take civil action or pursue a criminal prosecution. In the case where a member of staff has acted within the law, this will provide a defence to any civil or criminal prosecution.

Members of staff accused of using excessive force will not be automatically suspended as a response to the allegations. The following procedure will be adhered to, in line with the Managing Allegations Against Staff and Low Level Concerns Policy:

- Careful consideration will be given to whether the case warrants a person being suspended until the allegation is resolved.
- The trust board will always take into account whether a staff member has acted within the law when considering whether or not to take disciplinary action against a staff member involved in an incident.
- Where a member of staff is suspended, the school/Trust will ensure that the staff member has access to a named contact that can provide support and guidance.
- The school/Trust will provide pastoral care to any member of staff who is subject to a formal allegation.

Where a safeguarding allegation is made against a member of staff that involves physical contact, e.g. restraint, the strategy discussion or initial evaluation with the LADO will take into account that teachers and other school/Trust staff are entitled to use reasonable force to control or restrain pupils in certain circumstances, including dealing with disruptive behaviour.

11. SAFE TOUCH

The school/Trust 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/Trust 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.

The school/Trust designates that the only appropriate places on a pupil's body to touch them are their shoulders, arms and upper back.

Staff employing touch for reward or comfort will use the 'school/Trust hug', rather than an embrace. The school/Trust 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/Trust deems inappropriate.

The school/Trust 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/Trust-hug or school/Trust-hand-hold instead.

Appropriate touch involving pupils with SEND will be in line with their EHC plan or other school/Trust documentation.

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 procedures, or, where there have been multiple reports of inappropriate touch or an instance of touch which is severely inappropriate, the Managing Allegations Against Staff and Low Level Concerns Policy.

APPENDIX

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.

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

Reason(s) for physical intervention (please tick):	
Danger to self	<input type="checkbox"/>
Danger to others	<input type="checkbox"/>
Significant damage to property	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was it a planned intervention, e.g. in line with approved strategies for the behaviour of specific pupils? Please circle.	Yes/No
Details of the intervention:	
Any disciplinary additional action taken:	
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: