

Pathway Schools Ltd

Physical Intervention Policy

Statement of intent

Pathway Schools limited believes that it is important to establish a safe, secure and stable environment to enable students 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 student 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 students' 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.

Date policy last reviewed: 1 September 2025

Date for next review: 1 September 2026

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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'

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Board of Directors/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 an annual basis.
- Responding to any complaints, in liaison with the headteacher, from students 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 students.
- 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 section of the Child Protection and Safeguarding 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.
- Ensuring that the Behaviour Policy sets out the circumstances in which force might be used.
- Responding to any complaints, in liaison with the Board of Directors/Governing Board, from students or parents regarding the use of reasonable force.
- Carrying out risk assessments to ensure that staff who regularly work alongside students can use reasonable force and other restrictive interventions as safely as possible, if and when required.

The SENDCO is responsible for:

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

The DSL is responsible for:

- Providing staff with annual reasonable force training 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 Board of Directors/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 student from:
 - Causing injury to themselves or others.
 - Committing a criminal offence.
 - Damaging property.
 - Causing disorder among students, 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

Restrictive intervention: An action or measure used to prevent, limit, or control the movement of a student's body, or part of their body. Within this policy, restrictive intervention is used as an umbrella term encompassing both physical and non-physical interventions intended to restrict a student's movement or behaviour.

Reasonable force: A legal term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of school staff have the statutory power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances. Reasonable force refers to the minimum level of force necessary, applied for the shortest possible duration, and proportionate to the specific circumstances of the incident.

Significant incident: Any incident in which the use of force exceeds appropriate physical contact between students and staff. This includes situations where physical force is used to carry out or support a non-physical restrictive intervention.

Seclusion: A non-disciplinary intervention involving the confinement of a student to a space away from others, with their freedom to leave restricted. This may be achieved through physical obstruction, blocking exits, or actions that lead the student to believe they will face negative consequences if they attempt to leave.

Restraint: A term used in legislation to describe a non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises a student or restricts their movement. Restraint may involve direct physical contact or indirect actions. Examples include holding a student's arms to their sides or removing an item that enables mobility, such as crutches.

4. Avoiding physical intervention and reducing risk

The school will expect 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 students 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 students in their class, and will ensure that incidents of disruptive or aggressive behaviour in the classroom are handled in line with individual students' 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 student, 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 student's welfare:**
 - Staff will consider the impact on the student's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken.
 - Staff will maintain respect for a student's dignity.
 - Where possible, staff will clearly and calmly communicate to the student what is happening, why, and explain what the student needs to do.
 - For students with communication difficulties or EAL, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies will be used to ensure the student understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.
 - Staff will seek to understand the student'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 student from causing harm to themselves or others, committing a criminal offence, damaging property, or causing disorder among students. 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 student attempts to run out into a busy road, or where students begin a violent fight with one another and staff are forced to pull the students 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 student 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 student 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 student 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 student.
- The student will be appropriately supervised at all times.
- The restriction will last only for as long as the immediate risk of harm remains.
- The student 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. Students with SEND

The school will have due consideration to how students 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 students 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 students 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 students 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 students 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 student, 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 student to express their emotions before they become overwhelmed.
- Engaging the student in an activity which can help them manage their feelings of anxiety.
- Distracting the student 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 student with SEND will be applicable to other students with SEND.

Where appropriate, staff will work with students 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 student. Any behaviour support plan will be reviewed with the student 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 students and staff, any patterns and trends, and how the use of restrictive interventions might be avoided in the future.

If appropriate, the student 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 student 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 students 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 student and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed. Additionally, any student who witnesses an incident of restrictive intervention will also be provided with appropriate support where necessary.

8. Recording and reporting incidents

The Board of Directors/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 student.

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 student's behaviour support plan.

The school will record the following details as a minimum:

- Names of students and staff directly involved.
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the student.
- 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, 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 Board of Directors/Governing Board annually for evaluation.

Where reasonable force or physical restraint has been used, the student's parents/carers will be informed unless it appears that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the student. If the decision is made that the parents cannot be informed as this would place the child at greater risk, the incident will be reported to the LA.

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 students about the incident, for instance those who witnessed the event.

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

The Board of Directors/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 student'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 student's movement without direct physical contact, such as preventing a student from leaving a space or removing an item that enables mobility.

The school will record the following details as a minimum:

- Names of the student and staff directly involved.
- The time, date, location, and approximate duration of the intervention.
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the student, 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 student. 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 student 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. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the headteacher, DSL, SENCO and Board of Directors/Governing Board, who will consider any necessary changes and communicate the findings of the review to all members of staff.