The Polesworth School
ENSURING EXCELLENCE

Physical Intervention and Restraint Policy

Member of leadership team with lead responsibility for oversight and update of policy	DOW
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Value statement

It is our view that all of our students, including those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged, should have the greatest possible opportunity to be the best they can be. That includes being safe from harm.

The safety and well-being of all students is paramount. Where there is a need for plans and interventions, these are based on a clear assessment of the developmental progress and the difficulties that a student may be experiencing.

The use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions can have a significant impact on the students, staff members and parents involved, as well as the wider classroom. However, there are times when the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions will be lawful; for example, to keep individuals and the wider school community safe. (Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.)
The school aims to proactively minimise the need to use reasonable force and other restrictive interventions through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies.

The purpose of all interventions is to achieve the best possible outcomes for each child, recognising that each child is unique.

Children must be listened to and every effort made to understand their wishes and feelings. Staff, volunteers and other professionals should do everything possible to develop co-operative working relationships with students and their parents or caregivers.

Interventions and services should be provided according to the identified needs of the child and their impact on a child's developmental progress should be reviewed. Practice with children must be based on sound professional judgement underpinned by rigorous evidence base and the practitioner's knowledge and experience.

All staff and volunteers that work with children and young people have a duty of care to keep children, young people, colleagues and themselves safe. All staff and volunteers should therefore be aware of this policy and know how to use physical intervention safely and when it is appropriate to do so.

Physical intervention should only be used when absolutely necessary, in accordance with the law and clear ethical values and principles which respect the rights and dignity of children and young people. The use of restraint must be **reasonable and proportionate** and should always be in the **best interests of children and young people**.

Behaviour is always about communication. Seeking to understand what any behaviour is about is the first step in choosing an effective response.

Professionals should seek to utilise a full range of strategies for positive and proactive responses to student behaviour to promote and teach appropriate and socially acceptable ways of communicating.

Professionals should utilise strategies to diffuse and de-escalate challenging situations as a matter of course before any physical intervention takes place.

The purpose of this document

- To provide a set of unifying principles governing the use of force, physical intervention and restraint by all staff who encounter children and young people who exhibit challenging behaviour, aggression or violence that could jeopardise their own or another's safety.
- To ensure consistency of approach by sharing this policy with all employees and other stakeholders, including parents/carers, students and the SSC.

Definitions

Restrictive interventions: Any planned or reactive action which limits a pupil's movement, liberty or freedom to act independently. Restrictive interventions may include use of equipment, medication or seclusion (supervised confinement and isolation of a pupil, away from other students, in an area from which the pupil is prevented from leaving of their own free will. Restrictive interventions may or may not involve the use of reasonable force.)
Restraint: A form of restrictive intervention involving direct physical contact and force where the intention is to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. Restraint may also include mechanical or chemical restraint. Restraint may or may not involve the use of force.
Reasonable force: Physical contact by a member of staff on a pupil to control or restrain their actions/movements. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances. Any use of reasonable force is an example of a restrictive intervention and may or may not involve the use of restraint.

These terms are not necessarily mutually exclusive categories. For example, depending on the circumstances, if two members of staff briefly physically pull apart two students who are fighting, all three definitions could be relevant.

Principles

1. Compliance with the Law
2. Prevention, Risk Analysis and Management Strategy
3. Disability and Special Needs
4. “De-escalation”
5. Appropriate Use of Force
6. Post Incident Management
7. Complaints and Allegations
8. Staff Training
9. Physical Contact in Other Circumstances
10. Overview and Monitoring

Compliance with the law

- All employees and volunteers are required to work within the law and in accordance with statutory guidance.

- All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances. Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 details that reasonable force may be used to prevent or stop a pupil from causing injury to themselves or others, committing a criminal offence, damaging property, or doing something that prejudices discipline at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

- Assessments of what is reasonable and when it is reasonable to use force are matters of professional judgment and depend upon the precise circumstances of individual cases. There is no legal definition. This underlines the need for this policy and for staff training to ensure awareness of the following legal dimensions:

    - To be judged lawful, the force used would need to be proportionate to the consequences it is intended to prevent;

    - The degree of force used should be the minimum required to achieve the desired result;

    - Key legal words to be noted are **reasonable, proportionate** and **necessary.** Any action taken should always be **in the best interests of the child.**

- The Duty of Care that applies to all those working with children means that "doing nothing" may be construed as "negligence" in terms of this duty.
- Schools should therefore not have a 'no touch' policy.

Prevention/Risk Analysis and Management Strategy

- Prevention of injury, violence or aggression is our primary aim, thus avoiding the need to use any force wherever possible.
- Most incidents of violence and aggression are triggered (usually unwittingly) by the behaviour of others.
- Stressing to staff the importance of recognition and awareness of behaviours or circumstances which can trigger or indicate a heightened risk of challenging behaviour, violence and aggression is a key component of the school's policies and procedures.
- These aspects are addressed in staff training, with the aim of enabling staff to recognise that challenging behaviours are often foreseeable and developing skills associated with positive behaviour management and managing conflict. Further information, including strategies to help limit potential conflict, can be found in our Behaviour and Discipline Policy.
- Risk assessments, risk management plans and/or individual behaviour plans are set in place in circumstances where a heightened risk of challenging behaviour, violence and aggression has been identified in respect of a particular child or young person.

Disability and Special Educational Needs

- Some children and young people with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Triggers may include pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar situations or environments or feelings of fear and anxiety. Students who find verbal communication challenging may express their needs, discomfort or confusion through actions. This can lead to students with SEND being disproportionately subject to the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions.

- Where concerns are identified, risk assessments are undertaken to address any specific issues concerning the student and any foreseeable issues that may arise and are likely to warrant the use of force to restrain them.

- This approach may include the creation of a plan to manage behaviour. An example where this may be necessary is where a child whose Special Education Needs (SEN) and/or disability (whether a physical or learning disability) are associated with extreme behaviour.

- An individual risk assessment and a plan to manage behaviour may be necessary for children and young people whose SEN and/or disabilities are associated with:

    - Communication impairments that make them less responsive to verbal communication;

    - Physical disabilities and/or sensory impairments;

    - Conditions that make them fragile, such as haemophilia, brittle bone syndrome or epilepsy;

    - Dependence on equipment such as wheelchairs, breathing or feeding tubes.

    - Social, emotional and mental health needs

- Those involved in the care and management of these children should ensure they are as well informed as possible about the student's behavioural characteristics or patterns stemming from their special needs or disability; and make use of the knowledge and insight that the student, their parents and other relevant professionals can provide.

- Any risk assessments should consider the skills and abilities required of staff in dealing with the student and address any training required. This is relevant in terms of ensuring that suitably qualified and trained staff are available to deal with the student and that the staff member is prepared to deal with the situation, thus meeting the school's Duty of Care in respect of both the student and the employee.

A risk assessment should incorporate a risk reduction plan and those should be shared with all involved in supporting the student concerned, including parents/carers.
Staff should also work with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies. Depending on the circumstances, examples

of strategies may include: removing stimuli that may be causing distress; changing body language, facial expression, and/or tone of voice; supporting the pupil to express their emotions before getting 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.

De-escalation

- The school emphasises the importance of **employing de-escalation strategies as a first-line strategy** whenever there is a threat of violence or aggression towards an individual or property.

- Training on how to use these de-escalation strategies is provided for all newly qualified and newly appointed teachers during their induction. Non-teaching staff who are also working with students in a classroom-based context such as Teaching Assistants and ICT technicians are also provided with this training during their induction programme.

- Communicating calmly with children, using non-threatening verbal and body language and helping them to see a way out of a situation are examples of this approach.

- Helping children to recognise their own 'triggers' and 'early warning signs' will be important components of a de-escalation strategy developed in respect of a particular child.

- Giving students time, space and strategies to calm down before their behaviour escalates is crucial.

- Staff should consider how the school and classroom environment can support all students to achieve and thrive.

Appropriate Use of Force

There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in schools to use reasonable force to safeguard children. 'Reasonable' in these circumstances means 'using no more force than is needed'. Members of staff have the power to use reasonable force to prevent students committing an offence, injuring themselves or others, or damaging property and to maintain good order and discipline at the school or among students.

Having **emphasised the importance of attempting to de-escalate situations**, staff have clear guidance on the types of force and techniques that may be used to intervene physically or restrain children and young people as detailed below.

- Physical restraint should never be used as a method of punishment or to cause pain or distress to a student. Its purpose is to prevent the student causing injury to themselves or others.

The decision to intervene using physical restraint should be a professional judgment taken calmly and in full knowledge of the desired outcome

- **Consideration of the risks of employing an intervention will be balanced against the risks of not doing so. Though ideally a last resort, it should not be an act of desperation but a conscious decision to act in the best interests of the child in question and other children who may be affected**.

- Students should not be deliberately restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation, for example by covering the mouth and/or nose or applying pressure to the neck region or abdomen. No student should ever be held around the throat. Additionally, restraint should not place any restriction around the throat due to clothing, lanyards etc. The dangers of positional asphyxia, which can result in the compromise of an individual's breathing must be always considered.

- The use of force can be dangerous, particularly where it occurs on the ground. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their holds or re-position into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.

- Staff should consider the personal circumstances of the pupil such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.

- In extreme circumstances, where there is a high and immediate risk of death or serious injury such as a student threatening to hit someone with a dangerous object or running out into a busy road, a member of staff would be justified in taking any necessary action to prevent harm to the student, other students, members of the public or staff. However, even in those more extreme circumstances, the principle of minimum force to achieve the desired result should be applied.

- Every effort should be made by staff to avoid acting in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury. However, in the most extreme

circumstances, such as preventing a child from running off a pavement onto a busy road, it may not always be possible to avoid injuring a child. Staff should always avoid touching or restraining a child in a way that could be interpreted as sexually inappropriate conduct.

Headteachers and authorised school staff may also use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances when conducting a search for legally prohibited items, but not to search for items banned under the school rules only. The decision to use reasonable force should be made on a case-by-case basis. Staff should refer to the Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools guidance document for detailed advice on searching a pupil.

Post Incident Management and Notifications

Incidents must be reported and recorded by the staff member(s) involved as soon as practicable after the event. The school will record the following details:

- names of pupil and staff directly involved
- any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code
- time, date, location and approximate length of time the intervention was used 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, what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of physical injuries sustained, if applicable.
- brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance
- any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

Incidents must be reported to the parents/carers of the pupil involved as soon as practicable after the event. A report of the incident made to parents will include the following details:

- time, date, location and approximate length of time the force was used
- brief account of what type of reasonable force was applied, and the degree of force
- details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance
- The requirement to report applies even if the use of reasonable force in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

Where a recordable incident concerns a looked after child, the social worker must also be notified as soon as possible

If necessary, the pupil and staff member involved should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. In line with school procedures, an accident form should be completed, if required, by any individual injured during restraint. This includes meeting statutory reporting requirements for relevant incidents that fall under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

All staff should be aware that any restraint is a restriction of liberty and an invasion of personal space which may have a lasting impact on the well-being of the student. Consideration needs to be given as to who is best placed to undertake any follow-up work, if required. There may be a need to involve services provided by external agencies.

There will be a need for post incident debriefing for staff and an incident review led by designated staff within set timescales.

Time and space will also be needed to talk through the incident with the child or young person to hear their perception and understanding of the incident and to identify any post incident support which may be necessary.

Support for others witnessing or otherwise involved in the incident is available. This may involve giving the child who has been restrained the opportunity to recognise and help repair the damage or harm that has resulted from their behaviour and enable them to develop their emotional and social skills.

The school will evaluate the incident to understand why reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions were used, the impact on the staff and students, any patterns and trends, and how the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions might be avoided in the future.

The school will continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed, for example through further follow-up conversations, counselling or other resources. Additionally, any pupil who witnesses an incident of reasonable force and/or restrictive intervention where a peer may have been injured or become distressed, should also be provided with appropriate support where necessary.

Complaints and Allegations

- Students and parents have the right to complain about actions taken by staff. This might include the use of force. The school's Complaints Procedure enables such allegations to be fully addressed and the Physical Intervention and Restraint Policy is available for parents and students to scrutinise as part of that process.

- Community Academies Trust's Whistleblowing Policy is also available to staff and parents/carers.
- Any complaints or allegations would be dealt with in line with the school's complaints procedure.

Allegations of a safeguarding nature against any individual who works or volunteers with children should be referred to the Designated Officer (DO) within one working day, as stipulated in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2025.

Staff Training

- All staff identified as requiring training are appropriately trained and regularly updated not only in the safe and effective use of the type of force sanctioned by the school, but also in all other aspects of behaviour management, physical intervention and restraint, including positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviour, prevention, de-escalation and post-incident management.

The training of staff makes clear the dangers of positional asphyxia, which can result in the compromise of an individual's breathing.

Physical Contact in Other Circumstances

- As a school we recognise that there may be some students for whom touching of any description is particularly unwelcome.
- Some children may be particularly sensitive to physical contact because of their cultural background or non-neurotypicality or because they have been abused.
- Experiences of abuse may be an important factor behind their demonstration of challenging, violent and aggressive behaviour.
- It is important that staff who may encounter such students have the relevant information they need to respond as sensitively as possible. In addition, when identified, the school will develop a clear and consistent practice towards those individuals, which is understood and implemented by all members of staff.
- Staff should take particular care when undertaking physical contact with children and young people of the opposite gender.
- Physical contact with children and young people becomes increasingly open to question as they go through adolescence.

- Staff are encouraged to bear in mind that even innocent and well-intentioned physical contact can sometimes be misconstrued.

Overview and Monitoring

- The Polesworth School monitors incidents of violence and aggression and the use of restraint. Where necessary, the school will commission reviews and investigations into incidents of physical intervention and restraint.
- All incidents of physical intervention are reported to the SSC, which has a responsibility to monitor policy and practice.
- The school will regularly review and interrogate data on reasonable force and other restrictive interventions to:
    - identify and implement improvements to policies and practices, particularly where approaches have been used for some time but have not been effective.
    - identify areas of learning and development for school staff, supporting specific departments and teachers to improve understanding and practice.
    - understand students' repeat patterns and triggers to interrogate the effectiveness of pupil support measures, share this information with teachers who work with those students to better support them and, where appropriate, their parents, to establish a behaviour support plan or revise an existing plan.
    - identify any disproportionate use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions in relation to students who share protected characteristics, have SEN, or other types of vulnerability.

Understanding Behaviour

The school understands that:

- Behavioural interventions which seek only to control behaviour, rather than understand its meaning, are likely to prevent individuals from making the most of their potential.
- Challenging behaviour is often the result of a breakdown in communication.

- Staff teams involved in supporting individuals will aim to understand what function the behaviour serves and to teach the individual a more socially acceptable means of expressing their need for support, in line with our inclusive ethos at The Polesworth School.

Appendix 1– Further Reading and Guidance

- Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention. Children and young people with learning disabilities, autistic spectrum conditions and mental health difficulties in health and social care services and special education settings (Published: 27 June 2019)
- Behaviour in schools Advice for Headteachers and school staff (September 2022)
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Advice for schools July 2022
- 'Use of Reasonable Force' - Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies. (DfE Feb 2025)
- 'Guidance on the Use of Restrictive Physical Interventions for Students with Severe Behavioural Difficulties'. (DfE September 2003)
- Code of Practice for minimising the use of restrictive physical interventions, fourth edition. (BILD 2014)
- Education and Inspection Act 2006 (section 93) - sets out teachers' statutory powers of discipline and restraint and gives all members of school staff a legal power to use reasonable force and do not need specific authorisation to do so.
- Education Act 1996 (Appendix 1) - sets out a general power enabling head teachers to authorise staff to use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for prohibited items.
- DfES Letter to Chief Education Officers dated 24/4/01 - describes procedures and systems for recording incidents.
- 'Behaviour and Discipline in Schools' - sets out the use of reasonable force, behaviour and discipline in schools. Provides power to use reasonable force to prevent students committing an offence, injury to themselves or others, damaging property and maintaining good order and discipline in the classroom; and when conducting a search without consent for knives or weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco and cigarette papers, fireworks, pornographic images or articles that have been or could be used to commit an offence or cause harm (DfE February 2014).
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 – sets out responsibilities of employers to take reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees and others such as children and young people, who are affected by their undertakings/activities.