



Physical Intervention Policy

Signed by :

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September 2025

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Statement of intent

Mulbarton 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 (2013) 'Use of reasonable force in schools'
- DfE (2018) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
- DfE (2025) 'Keeping children safe in education 2025'
- HM Government (2019) 'Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedures
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

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 an annual basis.

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.
- Maintaining the records of the use of reasonable force and evaluating on a regular basis how reasonable force and restrictive physical intervention (RPI) is used.
- Ensuring that any member of staff who uses RPI records the incident fully on CPOMS and that parents are informed.
- Ensuring that the Behaviour Policy sets out the circumstances in which RPI might be used.

The Senior Leadership Team 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 RPI.
- Ensuring that staff understand the additional vulnerability of pupils with SEND or with medical conditions.
- Supporting teachers to develop 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.
- Evaluating on a regular basis how RPI is used with regard to pupils with SEND, in collaboration with the Headteacher.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is responsible for:

- Providing all staff with bi-annual STEP ON training.
- Providing appropriate staff with annual STEP UP training, where the Headteacher deems it necessary.
- Ensuring all members of staff use RPI in accordance with this policy.
- Reviewing this policy in liaison with the Headteacher and Governing board.

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 prevent a pupil from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing severe disruption. Reasonable force covers force that is necessary and proportionate to the circumstances.

There are two key types of reasonable force:

- '**Physical intervention**' – 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. guiding a pupil out of a classroom by their arm.
- '**Restrictive physical intervention**' – actions used in an attempt to physically control a child's movement. This type of intervention is typically used in more extreme circumstances, e.g. where a child needs to be held by staff or removed from a situation to prevent harm or further harm to themselves or others.

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. Positive handling

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 early changes in behaviour and response to 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.

Some pupils will have a Positive Behaviour Support Plan, which details strategies and support specific to the individual child.

Staff will not use physical contact or reasonable force immediately without first questioning whether there is a need to use physical intervention. Staff will first use agreed scripts, then consider whether:

- There are actions that can be taken to remove triggers from pupils, e.g. dimming the lights and encouraging quiet where a pupil is dysregulated in response to sensory overstimulation.
- 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, help with a job or go to their identified safe space.
- They have the ability, training and adequate support to physically intervene safely without causing unnecessary harm to the pupil or themselves.

Where there is no immediate risk of harm to themselves or others, destruction of property or serious disruption, reasonable force will not be used on the pupil. 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 and the child is now at risk of harm.

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 required 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. RPI is not used as a method of behaviour management or discipline – only in situations that require de-escalation to prevent harm.

5. Reasonable force

Staff members will use actions that are reasonable, proportionate and necessary to the circumstances. Physical restraint will never be used routinely. 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 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 support pupils risking the safety of themselves or others outside of school premises where the same range of support options are not always available, e.g. on school trips.
- 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 direction to leave.

All members of staff will be permitted to use RPI 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.

The power to use reasonable force also applies to any individual whom the Headteacher has identified as temporarily in charge, such as volunteers.

In many cases where physical intervention or reasonable force is required, minimal and non-restrictive force will be appropriate, e.g: using a guiding hand to escort a pupil from a classroom.

Reasonable force techniques that involve restraint will only be used where the staff member in charge feels it is necessary to prevent serious harm. In general, a RPI will only be used briefly and prolonged restraint will not be used, i.e. restraint beyond that which is necessary to remove the immediate threat a pupil is posing to themselves or others.

Where staff determine physical intervention is necessary, they will calmly communicate the reasons for their actions to the pupil and explain why it is necessary in a non-threatening manner. In most cases, staff will communicate this to pupils and will allow 'take up time' before making physical contact to minimise distress and/or further aggressive behaviour from the

pupil; however, the school recognises that this is not always possible in some emergency situations.

Staff will never act out of anger or use RPI to punish the pupil. Staff members will always avoid acting in a way that could cause injury; however, the school understands that accidental injury may occur in emergency situations where there is not sufficient time for a considered response, e.g. bruising on a child's wrist where a staff member has grabbed them to prevent them running onto a busy road. Any injury as a result of physical intervention will be recorded on CPOMS and reported to parents.

Where a member of staff believes that they are at risk, e.g. where an injury is likely to occur, they will not intervene in an incident without the help and assistance of another staff member.

Reasonable force techniques which present an **unacceptable** risk and will not be used under any circumstances include:

- The 'seated double embrace' where two staff members force a pupil into a sitting position and lean them forward whilst a third staff member monitors their breathing.
- The 'double basket-hold' in which a pupil's arms are held across their chest.

Staff will also be aware that, in some instances, it will cause more distress to a pupil, and may increase the risk of harm to their peers, if they are prevented from leaving an area, e.g. their classroom, using physical intervention. Where it is not dangerous to allow them to leave, the staff member in charge of the situation should use their judgement in allowing a pupil to remove themselves from the area, as environmental factors in the area specifically may be provoking their behaviour. Alternatively, it is sometimes more appropriate to remove the class from the area to cause less disruption to learning and to prevent further humiliation or shame to the pupil.

Following an incident where reasonable force is used, the pupil involved may be subject to separate disciplinary procedures. A meeting may be held with the pupil's parents to discuss the need to create or review a Positive Behaviour Support Plan, in which strategies will be formed to help avoid reoccurrence of such incidents.

6. Pupils with SEND

The school 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 who 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 is aware that pupils with SEND may sometimes become dysregulated, which can sometimes display behaviour which may be aggressive or seem uncontrollable. Where it is known that a pupil becomes dysregulated, SLT will support the teacher to complete a risk assessment to determine planned strategies for managing the pupil's behaviours 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, e.g. a firm hug; however, this will be discussed as part of relevant risk assessments and will be clearly written into any Positive Behaviour Support Plan.

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

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, e.g. by providing them with something to play with or demonstrating a less harmful stim, such as hand flapping.

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 strategies to support a pupil to engage in safer stims will be included as part of the pupil's risk assessment.

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

7. Post-incident support

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

Wherever RPI is used, staff members involved in incidents will be given separate opportunities to debrief to SLT and reflect on what happened.

Staff will explain to the pupil involved the reason that such intervention was used, and reassure them 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. As part of the school's restorative approach, the pupil will be asked about the reasons for their behaviour, including:

- Why their environment was causing such distress for them, e.g. in an instance of sensory overstimulation.
- Whether they feel there was anything that could have been done to meet their needs before the situation escalated.
- Whether, and how, staff actions were helpful or unhelpful.

Staff will be encouraged to reflect on their actions and how they managed the situation.

Staff will record the incident on CPOMS. Staff will include whether the pupil was harmed or at risk of harm. All reports are read and analysed by SLT.

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 RPI has been used, the pupil's parents will be informed as long as this would not place the pupil at greater risk. 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 Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. The Headteacher will make the final decision as to whether it is appropriate to inform the pupil's parents of the details of an incident. If it is appropriate, the following will be adhered to:

- Parents will be informed as soon as possible after the incident.

If a member of staff witnesses or suspects the use of unreasonable force, where another member of staff is actively involved in physical intervention, they will immediately report this to the Headteacher or a member of SLT.

Any allegations against staff will be dealt with as a matter of urgency, and in accordance with the procedures outlined in the school's Whistleblowing Policy and Code of Conduct.

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.

8. Safe touch

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

Staff employing touch for congratulation or comfort will use the 'school hug', rather than an embrace. The school hug is, where possible, 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.

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 inappropriate hand-holding and hugging. Should a pupil try to engage in any inappropriate physical contact, the member of staff will minimise any shame or feeling of rejection and suggest they engage in the school-hug or eg: the school hand-hold instead.

Lap sitting: In younger years, sometimes children will want to sit on an adult's lap to seek comfort. In these circumstances, staff will not initially discourage the child, but will look to comfort the child in a safe and appropriate way in order to minimise lap-sitting time. Staff will ensure another colleague is made aware and will ensure they are visible at all times.

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 Health Care Plan and / or Positive Behaviour Support Plan, where appropriate.

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 Safeguarding Policy.

9. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Headteacher, SLT 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 September 2026.

