

WINDMILL PRIMARY SCHOOL PHYSICAL INTERVENTION POLICY

1 Background

We define physical intervention as follows:

Physical intervention is when a member of staff uses force intentionally to restrict a child's movement against his or her will.

All staff within this setting aim to help children take responsibility for their own behaviour. We do this through a combination of approaches, which include:

- positive role modelling
- teaching an interesting and challenging curriculum
- setting and enforcing appropriate boundaries and expectations
- providing supportive feedback
- and prioritising de-escalation over the use of physical intervention.

More details about this and our general approach to promoting positive behaviour can be found in our behaviour policy.

There are times when children's behaviour presents particular challenges that may require physical intervention. This policy sets out our expectations for the use of such intervention. It is not intended to refer to the general use of physical contact which might be appropriate in a range of situations, such as:

- giving physical guidance to children (for example in practical activities and PE)
- providing emotional support when a child is distressed
- providing physical care (such as first aid or toileting).

This policy is consistent with our Child Protection and Equal Opportunities policies, and with national and local guidance for schools on safeguarding children including *Use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions in schools* (2025).

We exercise appropriate care when using physical contact (there is further guidance in our Child Protection policy); there are some children for whom physical contact would be inappropriate (such as those with a history of physical or sexual abuse, or those from certain cultural/religious groups). We pay careful attention to issues of sex and privacy, and to any specific requirements of certain cultural/religious groups.

2 Principles for the use of physical intervention

2.1 In the context of positive approaches

We only use physical intervention where the risks involved in using force are outweighed by the risks involved in not using force. It is not our preferred way of managing children's behaviour. Physical intervention may be used only in the context of a well-established and well implemented positive behaviour management framework with the exception of emergency situations. We describe our approach to promoting positive behaviour in our Behaviour Policy. We aim to do all we can in order to avoid using physical intervention.

We would only use physical intervention where we judge that there is no reasonably practicable less intrusive alternative. However, there may be rare situations of such concern

where we judge that we would need to use physical intervention immediately. We would use physical intervention at the same time as using other approaches, such as saying, "Stop!" and giving a warning of what might happen next. Safety is always a paramount concern and staff are not advised to use physical intervention if it is likely to put themselves at risk. We will make parents/guardians aware of our Physical Intervention policy alongside other policies when their child joins our school.

2.2 Duty of care

We all have a duty of care towards the children in our setting. This duty of care applies as much to what we *don't* do as what we *do* do. When children are in danger of hurting themselves or others, or of causing significant damage to property, we have a responsibility to intervene. In most cases, this involves an attempt to divert the child to another activity or a simple instruction to "Stop!" along with a warning of what might happen next. However, if we judge that it is necessary, we may use physical intervention.

2.3 Reasonable force

When we need to use physical intervention, we use it within the principle of reasonable force. This means using an amount of force in proportion to the circumstances. We use as little force as is necessary in order to maintain safety, and we use this for as short a period as possible.

3 When physical intervention might be used

The use of physical intervention may be justified where a pupil is:

1. committing an offence (or, for a pupil under the age of criminal responsibility, what would be an offence for an older pupil)
2. causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself); or
3. prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any pupils receiving education at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Physical intervention may also be appropriate where, although none of the above have yet happened, they are judged as highly likely to be about to happen.

We are very cautious about using physical intervention where there are no immediate concerns about possible injury or exceptional damage to property. Physical intervention would only be used in exceptional circumstances, with staff that know the student well and who are able to make informed judgements about the relative risks of using, or not using, physical intervention; for example stopping a younger child leaving the school site.

The main aim of physical intervention is usually to maintain or restore safety. We acknowledge that there may be times when physical intervention may be justified as a reasonable and proportional response to prevent damage to property or to maintain good order and discipline at the school.

However, we would be particularly careful to consider all other options available before using physical intervention to achieve either of these goals. In all cases, we remember that, even if the aim is to re-establish good order, physical intervention may actually escalate the difficulty.

If we judge that physical intervention would make the situation worse, we would not use it, but would do something else (like go to seek help, make the area safe or warn about what might happen next and issue an instruction to stop) consistent with our duty of care.

Staff take into consideration that the best interest of the child is paramount and this should then be weighed up against the safety and rights of others. To be confident in our judgements, we ensure staff are up to date with recent legislation and guidance of good practice in the area.

Our duty of care means that we might use a physical intervention if a child is trying to leave our site and we judged that they would be at unacceptable risk. This duty of care also extends beyond our site boundaries: there may also be situations where we need to use physical intervention when we have control or charge of children off site (e.g. on trips).

We never use physical intervention out of anger or as a punishment.

4 Who can use physical intervention

If the use of physical intervention is appropriate, and is part of a positive behaviour management framework, a member of staff who knows the child well should be involved, and where possible, trained through an accredited provider in the use of physical intervention. However, all members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances. Any of the following may be able to use reasonable force in the circumstances set out in Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act (2006):

1. any teacher who works at the school, and
2. any other person whom the headteacher has authorised to have control or charge of pupils, including:
 - (a) support staff whose job normally includes supervising pupils such as teaching assistants, learning support assistants, learning mentors and lunchtime supervisors; and
 - (b) people to whom the headteacher has given temporary authorisation to have control or charge of pupils such as paid members of staff whose job does not normally involve supervising pupils (for example catering or premises-related staff) and unpaid volunteers (for example parents accompanying pupils on school-organised visits) but not prefects.

5 Planning around an individual and risk assessment

In most situations, our use of physical intervention is in the context of a prior risk assessment which considers:

- a) What the risks are
- b) Who is at risk and how
- c) What we can do to manage the risk (this may include the possible use of physical intervention)

We use this risk assessment to inform the individual behaviour plan that we develop to support the child. If this behaviour plan includes physical intervention it will be as just one part of a whole approach to supporting the child's behaviour. The behaviour plan outlines:

- Our understanding of what the child is trying to achieve or communicate through his/her behaviour.
- How we adapt our environment to better meet the child's needs.
- How we teach and encourage the child to use new, more appropriate behaviours.

- How we reward the child when he or she makes progress.
- How we respond when the child's behaviour is challenging (responsive strategies).

We pay particular attention to responsive strategies. We use a range of approaches (including humour, distraction, relocation, and offering choices) as direct alternatives to using physical intervention. We choose these responsive strategies in the light of our risk assessment.

We draw from as many different viewpoints as possible when we anticipate that an individual child's behaviour may require some form of physical intervention. In particular, we include the child's perspective. We also involve the child's parents (or those with parental responsibility), advocates where appropriate, staff from our school who work with the child, and any visiting support staff (such as Educational Psychologists, Primary Behaviour Service, Speech and Language Therapists, Social Workers and colleagues from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services). We record the outcome from these planning meetings and seek parental signature to confirm their knowledge of our planned approach. We review these plans at least once every four to six months, or more frequently if there are any concerns about the nature or frequency of the use of physical intervention or where there are any major changes to the child's circumstances.

We recognise that there may be some children within our school who find physical contact in general particularly unwelcome as a consequence of their culture/religious group or disability. There may be others for whom such contact is troubling as a result of their personal history, in particular of abuse. We have systems to alert staff discreetly to such issues so that we can plan accordingly to meet individual children's needs.

Where an individual child has an individual positive behaviour management plan, which includes the use of physical intervention, we ensure that such staff receive appropriate training and support in behaviour management as well as physical intervention. We consider staff and children's physical and emotional health when we make these plans and consult with the child and their parents/guardians.

Where a child does not have an existing behaviour plan or risk assessment – i.e., in an emergency, staff do their best, using reasonable force within their duty of care.

6 What type of physical intervention can be used

Any use of physical intervention by our staff should be consistent with the principle of reasonable force. In all cases, staff should be guided in their choices of action by the principles in section 2 above.

Staff should not act in ways that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:

- holding a child around the neck or collar or in any other way that might restrict the child's ability to breathe
- twisting or forcing limbs against a joint
- holding a child by the hair or ear.

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.

Restrictive interventions: Any planned or reactive action which limits a pupil's movement, liberty or freedom to act independently. Restrictive interventions may or may not involve the use of reasonable force. We define seclusion to mean the supervised confinement and isolation of a pupil, away from other pupils, in an area from which the pupil is prevented from leaving of their own free will.

We prefer not to use seclusion, and will only do so as a last resort in order to prevent harm or damage to people or property if a child is exhibiting violence. In these cases:

- The door of a room may be closed or locked with a child inside the room and this may remain closed or locked if the risk of harm to another person is still high.
- A staff member should observe the child through the window of the closed/locked door to the room. The member of staff should attempt to maintain calm and clear dialogue with the child to say that we do not want the door to remain closed and it will be opened immediately when the child shows through their actions and words that the risk of harm to another person is low.
- A classroom or other space may be evacuated by all persons except for the child exhibiting violence or threatening behaviour. The classroom door may be closed with the child still inside the room, in order to prevent harm to another person.
- The period of time that a child is in seclusion will always be the minimum possible time for sufficient de-escalation to happen, so that the risk of harm to another person is sufficiently decreased.

If we need to seek further advice around the use of seclusion, other than in an isolated emergency situation, we would contact the lead Educational Psychologist for further advice and guidance.

We carefully consider wider issues around the *long-term* segregation of children and young people (e.g., including the removal of outdoor spaces or educating children or young people away from peers) and are clear about how these relate to Article 5 of the Human Rights Act (1998). The reasons for any courses of action should be clearly explained to the young person and their family.

7 Recording and reporting

We electronically record any use of physical intervention using CPOMS. The report will include time, date, location and approximate length of time the force was used, a brief account of what type of reasonable force was applied, and the degree of force, details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable, a brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance. We do this as soon as possible after an event, ideally within 24 hours. Where an incident causes injury to a member of staff, it should be recorded as per the corporate accident/incident reporting procedure using the online report form. Further, our governing body ensures that procedures are in place for recording significant incidents and then reporting these incidents as soon as possible to pupil's parents.

After using physical intervention, we ensure that the headteacher is informed as soon as possible. We also inform parents in person or by phone (or by letter or note home with the child if this is not possible). A copy of the record form is also available for parents to read. Records are retained for 25 years after the date of birth of the child.

In rare cases, we might need to inform the police, such as in incidents that involve the possession of weapons. This would be in line with our general practice, informed by the DfE Guidance *Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for schools* (2022) and Section 45 of the *Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006*.

8 Supporting and reviewing

We recognise that it is distressing to be involved in a physical intervention, whether as the child being held, the person doing the holding, or someone observing or hearing about what has happened.

After a physical intervention, we give support to the child so that they can understand why it was necessary. Where we can, we record how the child felt about this. Where it is appropriate, we have the same sort of conversations with other children who observed what happened. In all cases, we will wait until the child has calmed down enough to be able to talk productively and learn from this conversation. If necessary, the child will be asked whether he or she has been injured so that appropriate first aid can be given. This also gives the child an opportunity to say whether anything inappropriate has happened in connection with the incident.

We also support adults who were involved, either actively or as observers, by giving them the chance to talk through what has happened with the most appropriate person from the staff team.

A key aim of our after-incident support is to repair any potential strain to the relationship between the child and the people that were involved in the physical intervention.

After a physical intervention, we consider whether the individual behaviour plan needs to be reviewed so that we can reduce the risk of needing to use physical intervention again.

9 Monitoring

We monitor the use of physical intervention in our school. The Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher (Behaviour and Attendance) are responsible for reviewing the records on a termly basis, and more often if the need arises, so that appropriate action can be taken. The information is also used by the governing body when this policy and related policies are reviewed.

Our analysis considers equalities issues such as age, sex, disability, culture and religion issues in order to make sure that there is no potential discrimination; we also consider potential child protection issues. We look for any trends in the relative use of physical intervention across different staff members and across different times of day or settings. Our aims are to protect children, to avoid discrimination and to develop our ability to meet the needs of children without using physical intervention. We report this analysis back to the governing body so that appropriate further action can be taken and monitored.

10 Concerns and complaints

The use of physical intervention is distressing to all involved and can lead to concerns, allegations or complaints of inappropriate or excessive use. In particular, a child might complain about the use of physical intervention in the heat of the moment but on further reflection might better understand why it happened. In other situations, further reflection might lead the child to feel strongly that the use of physical intervention was inappropriate. This is why we are careful to ensure all children have a chance to review the incident after they have calmed down.

If a child or parent has a concern about the way physical intervention has been used, our school's complaints procedure explains how to take the matter further and how long we will take to respond to these concerns.

Where there is an allegation of assault or abusive behaviour, we ensure that the headteacher is immediately informed. We would also follow our child protection procedures. In the absence of the headteacher, in relation to physical intervention, we ensure that the deputy headteacher is informed. If the concern, complaint or allegation concerns the headteacher, we ensure that the Chair of Governors is informed.

Our staff will always seek to avoid injury to the pupil, but it is possible that bruising or scratching may occur accidentally. This is not to be seen as necessarily a failure of professional technique but a regrettable and infrequent side effect of making sure the children remain safe.

If parents/carers are not satisfied with the way the complaint has been handled, they have the right to take the matter further as set out in our complaints procedure.

The results and procedures used in dealing with complaints are monitored by the governing body.

11 Reviewing this policy

This policy has been adopted with the approval of the school Governing Body. It will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Hayley Richards September 2025

Review due: September 2026