

Wickford Primary School
Physical Intervention & Physical Contact Policy

1 Introduction

This document sets out for all categories of staff the policies of the school for physical intervention and contact with pupils. It provides important strategies for minimising the need for physical intervention and explains the options and strategies open to them when there is a need to intervene physically with pupils. Staff must clearly understand the options open to them. It is supported by 'Guidance on the use of Physical Intervention in Educational Establishments (August 2005)' provided by Essex County Council which offers further guidance and explains the legal framework within which this policy operates. This policy also forms part of the school's behaviour management and child protection policies and it will be made available to parents.

This policy recognises three distinct types of physical contact with pupils. These are dealt with in the following sections of this document.

Section 2	Touching and Holding
Section 3	Control and Direction
Section 4	Physical Restraint

A considerable proportion of this policy will be dedicated to the third aspect since it is the area where most guidance is needed. However, it should be stressed that the other sections are also important aspects of physical contact.

2 Touching and Holding Pupils

Control is not the only circumstances when there is physical contact between staff and pupils. This policy is not intended to deter appropriate physical contact between staff and pupils, but rather to offer practical guidance on when and how this might be appropriate. Staff should respond to pupils in a way that gives expression to appropriate levels of care, and to provide comfort to ease a pupil's distress. However, it is recognised that staff need to ensure that any physical contact is not misinterpreted by pupils.

The following guidelines should be followed: -

- The level and type of physical contact should reflect the educational and social needs of the pupil e.g. physical contact is likely to occur in some PE and drama activities
- Physical contact should not respond or lead to expectations or anxieties of any form i.e. it should not become habitual. Specific consideration should be given to the needs of pupils in school who may have suffered abuse and/or neglect
- Although a pupil asking a member of staff for physical comfort should not be responded to automatically, he or she should not be rejected without explanation
- There should be no general expectations of privacy for the physical expression of affection or comfort. Staff should endeavour not to be alone with a pupil in such a situation. (Male staff need to be particularly conscious of this.)

3 Control and Direction Through Physical Contact

There are occasions where control can be maintained by holding a pupil in a manner that does not carry the force of physical restraint. It is appropriate to use such physical prompts and guidance when positive verbal prompting has been unsuccessful.

For example: -

- a member of staff may insist on holding a pupil's hand to ensure that he/she is controlled and safe when crossing the road;
- Pupils may be successfully re-engaged in their educational activities by an arm on their shoulder or by leading them back to their seat; similarly, a pupil may be diverted from destructive behaviour;

- pupils engaged in an argument or a fight, which in itself is not likely to cause serious harm but is nonetheless disruptive and detrimental to the well-being of other pupils, may be successfully separated by being guided away and held with little or no force.

4 Physical Restraint

4.1 General Procedure for Physical Restraint

The use of physical restraint is set out in our Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy which should be read in conjunction with this policy.

Except in cases of emergency, it is expected that all other strategies to control a pupil will be tried before applying physical restraint e.g. verbal commands, physical control. The use of physical intervention should always be a last resort when all other attempts to control a pupil have failed.

On rare occasions there is no alternative to restraining pupils physically in their own and others' interests and safety. In such instances no more than minimum necessary force should be used, taking into account all the circumstances. In other words, physical intervention is the last resort and it must be reasonable and proportionate in every case.

The purpose of intervention is to restore safety and restraint should not be continued for longer than is necessary.

The following guidelines should be followed: -

- During an incident of restraint, the minimum force necessary should be used and the pupil should continuously be offered the opportunity to regain self-control.
- Restraint should never be carried out in anger by staff.
- Interventions should only be made when they are likely to succeed.
- Ideally, more than one adult should be present.
- When restraining, gender or cultural differences should be taken into account.
- Pupils should never be restrained by being tied up or bound.
- Staff should make every effort to avoid any injury to the pupil and themselves. They are not expected to restrain a pupil if by doing so they will put themselves at significant risk.
- Brief periods of withdrawal away from the point of conflict into a calmer environment may be more effective for an agitated pupil than holding or physical restraint.

4.2 Types of Incident Where Force May Be Required

There are a wide variety of situations in which reasonable force might be appropriate, or necessary, to control or restrain a pupil. They will fall into two broad categories: -

- Where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is imminent risk of injury;
- Where there is developing risk of injury, or significant damage to property;

Examples of these situations are: -

- A pupil attacks a member of staff, or another pupil;
- Pupils are fighting;
- A pupil is engaged in, or is on the verge of committing, deliberate damage or vandalism to property;
- A pupil is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials or objects;
- A pupil is running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way in which he or she might have or cause an accident likely to injure him or herself or others;
- A pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave school.
- A pupil has left school without permission.

4.3 Who May Use Reasonable Force

The Education Act 1996: Section 550A allows all teachers at a school to use reasonable force to control or restrain pupils.

The Head teacher will also authorise other people whom they wish to have control or charge of pupils). This may be on either a short or long term basis, depending on the circumstances. (Currently these will include all classroom assistants, midday assistants, and administrative staff on a long term basis.)

The provision applies when a teacher, or other authorised person, is on the school premises, and when he or she has lawful control or charge of the pupil concerned elsewhere e.g. on a field trip or other authorised out of school activity.

The Head teacher will keep a list of authorised staff (other than teachers) as an appendix to this policy. The Head must explicitly inform the people concerned, and is responsible for ensuring that they understand the contents of this policy. The Head will also ensure that teachers are aware of who is on the authorised list.

4.4 What Type of Force Can Be Used?

Physical intervention can take several forms. It might involve staff:

- Physically interposing between pupils;
- Blocking a pupil's path
- Holding;
- Pushing;
- Pulling;
- Leading a pupil by the hand or arm;
- Shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back; or,
- (in extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds.

In exceptional circumstances, where there is an immediate risk of injury, a member of staff may need to take any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of 'reasonable force'. For example, to prevent a young pupil running off a pavement onto a busy road, or to prevent a pupil hitting someone, or throwing something.

In other circumstances staff should not act in a way that may be viewed as unwarranted, excessive or punitive. Such approaches might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:

- holding a pupil around the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict the pupil's ability to breathe;
- slapping, punching or kicking a pupil;
- twisting or forcing limbs against a joint;
- tripping up or rugby-tackling a pupil;
- holding or pulling a pupil by the hair or ear;
- holding a pupil face down on the ground.

If a child has left the school premises without permission, staff should not chase after them as this will intend to increase the risk to the child. A calmer approach should be used.

Staff should always avoid touching or holding a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent.

4.5 Self-Defence

If a pupil is assaulting a member of staff, due force may be used in self-defence. Due force can be described as the minimum force necessary to prevent or deflect the assault.

4.6 When Not to Intervene

Sometimes a member of staff should not intervene in an incident without help (e.g. where more than one pupil is involved, or if the member of staff believes that he or she may be at risk of injury.) In those circumstances the member of staff should remove other pupils who might be at risk, and summon assistance from a colleague or colleagues, or where necessary ask the Head to phone the police. The member of staff should inform the pupil(s) that he or she has sent for help. Until assistance arrives the member of staff should continue to attempt to defuse the situation orally, and try to prevent the incident from escalating.

4.7 Log Book

Staff must report all incidents where restraint has been necessary to the Headteacher (except minor or trivial incidents) and these will be recorded within one working day after the incident in a log book. This may help to prevent any misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the incident, and will be helpful should there be a complaint. The log book should identify the pupil involved and provide a summary of the incident and the action taken.

The Head may inform the pupil's parent/carer if deemed necessary when physical restraint has been applied. He may also consider inviting them to discuss the incident.

4.8 Restriction of Liberty

A pupil attempting to leave a room of the school premises should only be physically restrained if they are considered to be at risk of harming themselves or others. Pupils should never be locked in a room and should not be required to remain in a building for an unreasonable length of time without relief. If a pupil is being required to wait in a room while their parent, social services or the police attend, a member of staff should remain with them.

If a pupil has to be physically restrained to prevent them from running away, the restraint should not extend beyond holding with both arms engaged and employing controlled use of the weight of the body. The pupil should not be rugby-tackled because this would entail forceful knocking over and possible injury.

4.9 Searching Pupils

In the interests of safety for other pupils, common sense dictates that staff must have some right to search pupils if they have reasonable grounds for suspecting a pupil of concealing a particular item. Searches should only take place in the presence of the Head teacher or another senior member of staff and be conducted by a member of staff of the same sex as the pupil. Searches must not include intimate touching or strip-searching.

A pupil does, however, have the right to refuse to be searched and so his or her consent should be sought first. If, because of their age or stage of development, a pupil is unable to give their consent, their parent or the police should be contacted to be present during the search.

If the pupil refuses to disclose willingly the item they are suspected of concealing, the school should contact the police. Any search without the pupil's consent could become the subject of an assault charge against the member of staff concerned.

Furthermore, if drugs or stolen property were suspected, it would be more appropriately dealt with by the police in any event.

5 Pupils with Special Requirements

In exceptional circumstances, pupils who require complex or repeated physical management should have a completed risk assessment and a written handling policy that has been agreed with their parent.

The Head is responsible for ensuring that all members of staff who have, or may have, care of such a pupil are briefed about the individual risk assessment and handling policy.

6 Management Procedures and Monitoring

The Head is responsible for implementing the policy and for the regular review of the logbook (at least termly) to monitor the use of, and frequency of use of, physical interventions in relation to the staff and pupils involved.

A summary report to the Curriculum and Pupil Related sub-committee will be made annually during the summer term (e.g. number of incidents, seriousness of incidents, actions taken to reduce frequency, training for staff).

The Head will consider the need to revise any parts of this policy. Every member of staff will be given a copy of this policy and training will be provided. The policy will be included in the induction of new staff and in some circumstances the Head will offer additional training to particular members of staff.

All complaints and allegations will be investigated using either the School's Complaints Procedures or Safeguarding Children Procedures.

7 Related Documents

This document has been drawn up with reference to the following guidelines: -

- Essex LA "Guidance on Physical Contact with Pupils in Schools" April 1996
- DfEE Circular number 10/98 "Section 550A of the Education Act 1996: The Use of force to Control or Restrain Pupils."
- Essex LA "Guidance on Physical Intervention in Educational Establishments" August 2005

This policy was last updated in Jan 19 and will be updated annually.