



Dovelands
Primary School

Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy

Updated	April 2026
Approved by Full Governing Body	
Review Date	April 2028

1. Background

We define restrictive physical intervention as follows:

- Restrictive physical intervention is when a member of staff uses force intentionally to restrict a child's movement against their will.
- More clarity is added to this definition in the Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools Guidance for schools in England document published by the DfE
- Restrictive intervention: a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This guidance uses 'restrictive interventions' as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways.
- Reasonable force: a term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances.
- Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

Significant incident: any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff as described in 'Other physical contact with pupils' within this document. This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

Seclusion: a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others, and preventing them from leaving either by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave.

Restraint: a term used in legislation referring to a non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact. For example, holding a pupil's arms to their sides or removing a pupil's crutches would both be considered forms of restraint. (DfE, 2026)

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 engaging and challenging curriculum
- setting and enforcing appropriate boundaries and expectations
- providing supportive feedback.

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

There are times when children's behaviour presents particular challenges that may require restrictive 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).

1. This policy is consistent with our Safeguarding policies, and with national and local guidance for schools on safeguarding children.

We exercise appropriate care when using physical contact (there is further guidance in our Child Protection policy and Intimate Care plans).

2. Principles for the use of restrictive physical intervention.

In the context of positive approaches, we only use restrictive 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. Restrictive 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 and Relationships Policy. We aim to do all we can in order to avoid using restrictive physical intervention. We would only use restrictive 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 restrictive physical intervention immediately. We would use restrictive physical intervention at the same time as using other approaches, such as saying, “Stop!” and giving a warning/ explanation of what might have to happen next. Safety is always a paramount concern and staff are not advised to use restrictive physical intervention if it is likely to put themselves at risk. We will make our Restrictive Physical Intervention policy available on our school website.

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 restrictive physical intervention.

Reasonable force

When we need to use restrictive 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 of time as possible.

3. When restrictive physical intervention might be used

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

- committing an offence (or, for a pupil under the age of criminal responsibility, what would be an offence for an older pupil)
- causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself);

or

- 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.

Restrictive 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 restrictive physical intervention where there are no immediate concerns about possible injury or exceptional damage to property. Restrictive physical intervention would only be used in exceptional circumstances, with staff that know the pupil well and who are able to make informed judgements about the relative risks of using, or not using, restrictive physical intervention; for example, stopping a child leaving the school site. The main aim of restrictive physical intervention is usually to maintain or restore safety. We acknowledge that there may be times when restrictive 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 restrictive physical intervention to achieve either of these goals. In all cases, we remember that, even if the aim is to re-establish good order, restrictive physical intervention may actually escalate the difficulty. If we judge that restrictive physical intervention would make the situation worse, we would not use it, but would do something else (like seek further support, 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 restrictive 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 restrictive physical intervention when we have control or charge of children off site (e.g. on trips). We never use restrictive physical intervention out of anger or as a punishment.

4. Who can use restrictive physical intervention?

All staff at Doveland Primary School have received Team Teach training, focusing on de-escalation skills as well as physical intervention techniques with primary aged children. If the use of restrictive physical intervention is appropriate, and is part of a Positive Handling Plan, a member of staff who

knows the child well should be involved, trained through an accredited provider in the use of restrictive physical intervention.

5. Planning around an individual and risk assessment

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

- what the risks are
- who is at risk and how
- what we can do to manage the risk (this may include the possible use of restrictive physical intervention)

N.B If there is an incident where we have to use physical intervention and there is not already a risk assessment then one will then be completed. This may be in the moment.

We use this risk assessment to inform the individual behaviour plan (Positive Handling Plan) that we develop to support the child. If this behaviour plan includes restrictive 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. Such as:

- 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 they make progress.
- how we respond when the child's behaviour is challenging

We pay particular attention to triggers, responsive strategies and de-escalation strategies. We use a range of approaches (including distraction, relocation, and offering choices) as direct alternatives to using restrictive 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 restrictive 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, SEMH Team, Speech and Language Therapists, Social Workers). We record the outcome from these planning meetings and seek parental signature to confirm their knowledge of our planned approach. We review these plans and where there are any major changes to the child's presentation or circumstances or if there are any concerns about the nature or frequency of the use of restrictive physical intervention being used. Where an individual child has an individual positive behaviour management plan, which includes the use of restrictive physical intervention, we ensure that such staff receive appropriate training and support in behaviour management as well as restrictive 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 restrictive physical intervention can be used?

Any use of restrictive physical intervention by our staff should be consistent with the principle of reasonable force and in line with Team Teach strategies. 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.

Where staff need specific training in the use of restrictive physical intervention, we arrange that they should receive Team Teach training. We ensure that staff have access to appropriate refresher training. The priority is to train SLT in the first instance. Further, we actively work to ensure general

training is accessed by our staff in the following areas:

- those relating to legal issues policy and risk assessment
- tracking, understanding behaviour and planning for change.
- de-escalation techniques.

A record of such training is kept including on CPOMS. We do not plan for and do not advise, except in emergency situations, staff to move children to a safe space on their own against their will. Examples could include:

- Where a child has been escorted to a room in order to remove them from a dangerous situation and staff members observe them from outside of the room whilst holding the door shut (e.g. through a window), or the door being locked.
- Where a staff member has removed all the class members from a room and in order to prevent the pupil displaying the challenging behaviour from following, the door is shut so they are prevented from leaving. If we need to seek further advice around this, other than in an isolated emergency situation, we would contact external specialist colleagues
- 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 record any significant incident of use of restrictive physical intervention using the record form online from the local authority and kept on the pupil's CPOMS records. We complete this form 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 restrictive physical intervention, we ensure that the headteacher is informed as soon as possible. We also inform parents. 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. We also have a separate policy detailing this process further.

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 restrictive 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 regulated 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 restrictive physical intervention.

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

9. Monitoring

We monitor the use of restrictive physical intervention in our school. Headteacher and SENCO are responsible for reviewing the records inputted on CPOMS, so that appropriate action can be taken if and when needed. 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. This is in line with the Equality act 2010. We look for any trends in the relative use of restrictive 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 restrictive physical intervention.

10. Concerns and complaints

The use of restrictive 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 restrictive physical intervention in 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 restrictive physical intervention was inappropriate. This is why we are careful to ensure all children have a chance to review the incident after they have re-regulated.

If a child or parent has a concern about the way restrictive 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 restrictive 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 service user remain safe, so long as Team Teach techniques are used where at all possible. 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

We have finalized this policy in line with the DfE guidance Restrictive Interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools Guidance for schools in England which becomes statutory in April 2026. It is next due for review by April 2028.

Appendix 1: Summary guidance for staff on the use of physical intervention

Introduction

This guidance for staff is a summary of our school's detailed policy on the use of physical intervention. Where staff are in any doubt about the use of physical intervention, they should refer to the full policy. This summary guidance refers to the use of restrictive physical intervention (restraint) which we define as "when a member of staff uses force intentionally to restrict a child's movement against his or her will". Staff should not feel inhibited from providing physical intervention under other circumstances, such as providing physical support or emotional comfort where such support is professionally appropriate. The use of such support must be consistent with our Safeguarding policy.

Who can restrain? Under what circumstances can restraint be used?

All staff at Doveland's Primary School have received Team Teach training so can therefore apply these techniques if needed. However, SLT should be called to support an incident where physical intervention may be needed.

However, everyone has the right to use reasonable force to prevent actual or potential injury to people or damage to property (Common law power). Injury to people can include situations where a child's behaviour is putting him or herself at risk. In all situations, staff should always aim to use a less intrusive technique (such as issuing direct instructions, clearing the space of danger or seeking additional support) unless they judge that using such a technique is likely to make the situation worse. Teachers and other authorised staff may also use reasonable force where a child's behaviour is prejudicial to the maintenance of good order. Staff should be very cautious about using restrictive physical intervention under such circumstances, as it would only be appropriate in exceptional circumstances.

Statutory power - Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act (2006) enables school staff under statutory power to use such force as is reasonable and proportionate to prevent a pupil from doing or continuing to do any of the following:

- committing an offence (or, for a pupil under the age of criminal responsibility, what would be an offence for an older pupil)
- causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself) and 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).

Restraint should never be used as a substitute for good behaviour management, nor should it be employed in an angry, frustrated, threatening or punishing manner. Although all staff have a duty of care to take appropriate steps in a dangerous situation, this does not mean that they have to use restraint if they judge that their attempts to do so are likely to escalate the situation. They may instead issue a direction to stop, call for additional assistance from SLT or take appropriate action to make the environment as safe as possible (e.g. by clearing the room of children). Where it is anticipated that an individual pupil's behaviour makes it likely that they may be restrained, a risk assessment and intervention plan should be developed and implemented. Staff should ensure that they read all CPOMS alerts and Positive Handling Plans shared with them so they are up to date on support being given to pupils they work with.

What type of restraint can be used?

Any use of restrictive physical intervention should be consistent with the principle of reasonable force. This means it needs to be in proportion to the risks of the situation, and that as little force is used as possible, for as short a period of time, in order to restore safety. Staff should:

Before physical contact

- Use all reasonable efforts to avoid the use of physical intervention to manage children's behaviour. This includes issuing verbal instructions and a warning of an intention to intervene physically.
- Summon additional support before intervening. Such support may simply be present as an observer or may be ready to give additional physical support as necessary.
- Be aware of personal space and the way that physical risks increase when a member of staff enters the personal space of a distressed or angry child. (Staff should also note that any uninvited

interference with a student's property may be interpreted by them as an invasion of their personal space.) Staff should either stay well away or close the gap between themselves and the child very rapidly, without leaving a "buffer zone" in which they can get hit or kicked.

- Avoid using a "frontal", "squaring up" approach, which exposes the sensitive parts of the body, and which may be perceived as threatening. Instead, staff should adopt a sideways stance, with their feet in a wide, stable base. This keeps the head in a safer position, as well as turning the sensitive parts of the body away from punches or kicks. Hands should be kept visible, using open palms to communicate lack of threat.

Where physical contact is necessary

- Aim for side-by-side contact with the child. Staff should avoid positioning themselves in front of the child (to reduce the risk of being kicked) and should also avoid adopting a position from behind that might lead to allegations of sexual misconduct. In the side-by-side position, staff should aim to have no gap between the adult's and child's body. This minimises the risk of impact and damage.

- Aim to keep the adult's back as straight and aligned (untwisted) as possible. We acknowledge that this is difficult, given that the children we work with are frequently smaller than us.

- When attempting to make safe if a child has hold of another person (adult or child), ensure they are able to release their grip, but stabilise their position for balance, and make safe by ensuring they cannot pull away.

- Beware in particular of head positioning, to avoid clashes of heads with the child.

- Hold children by "long" bones, i.e. avoid grasping at joints where pain and damage are most likely. For example, staff should aim to hold on the forearm or upper arm rather than the hand, elbow or shoulder.

- Ensure that there is no restriction to the child's ability to breathe. In particular, this means avoiding holding a child around the chest cavity or stomach.

- Do all that they can to avoid lifting children.

- Keep talking to the child (for example, "When you stop kicking me, I will release my hold") unless it is judged that continuing communication is likely to make the situation worse. This may include count downs.

- Don't expect the child to apologise or show remorse in the heat of the moment.

- Use as little restrictive force as is necessary in order to maintain safety and for as short a period of time as possible.

After an incident

It can be distressing to be involved in a restrictive physical intervention, whether as the child being held, the person doing the holding, or someone observing or hearing about what has happened. All those involved in the incident should have the option to receive support to help them talk about what has happened and, where necessary, record their views. If needed the child or staff member will be medically assessed and injuries treated. Staff should inform the headteacher as soon as possible after an incident of restrictive physical intervention; parents/carers should also be informed. The physical intervention record and relevant forms should be completed as soon as possible and in any event within 24 hours of the incident. There will be a review following the incident which may include the need for coaching with the staff. There will be shared reflection so that lessons can be learned to reduce the likelihood of recurrence in the future. We will continue to monitor wellbeing of the pupil and staff providing additional support where needed.

