

# Priory Primary School

## Physical Intervention & Physical Contact Policy



*Priory Primary School*  
At the heart of the community

Title	Physical Intervention & Physical Contact Policy
Status	AGREED
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Ratified by	Governing Board
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Review Date	Autumn 2025

**This policy, which links to our whole school Behaviour Policy, must be adhered to by all members of staff in order to safeguard all pupils and themselves.**

## **1 Rationale**

In our school we believe that pupils need to be safe, to know how to behave positively, and to know that the adults around them are able to manage them safely and confidently. (See Behaviour Policy for more details.) Only for a very small minority of pupils will the use of physical intervention be needed.

The purpose of **physical intervention** is to take immediate control of a dangerous situation, in order to end or significantly reduce the risk of harm to the person and others around them. **Physical intervention** involves some form of **physical** contact and application of force to guide, restrict or prevent movement.

The aim of this policy is to identify what forms of physical intervention are allowed, to make all staff aware of the circumstances in which physical intervention might be appropriate and to identify factors that staff should bear in mind when deciding whether to use physical force. It also serves as a mechanism for informing parents of the legal situation surrounding the use of force in school.

## **2 What the law says:**

**Corporal punishment:** The school does not authorise, in any way, the use of corporal punishment to discipline children.

**Schools cannot:** Use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment. (Use of Reasonable Force, 2013, Department for Education).

Schools should **not** have a 'no contact' policy. There is a real risk that such a policy might place a member of staff in breach of their duty of care towards a pupil, or prevent them taking action needed to prevent a pupil causing harm. (Use of Reasonable Force, 2013, Department for Education).

**Authorised use of force:** Wherever possible, staff should first use 'non-contact' strategies for dealing with difficult situations. The school's Behaviour Policy provides clear guidelines for tackling behavior issues before they escalate, and staff are provided training in de-escalation techniques, though the Team Teach approach.

There are, however, certain instances when the use of physical force may be the only option to ensure the safety of both individuals or groups of pupils, or to maintain discipline. Section 550A of the 1996 Education Act allows teachers and other persons who are authorised by the Headteacher to use such force as is reasonable to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- Committing a criminal offence
- Injuring themselves or others
- Causing damage to property - including the pupils' own property
- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline, either on school premises or on an educational visit

*Physical force is not justified to prevent a trivial misdemeanor, or in a situation that could be resolved without force and should always be used as a last resort.*

### **Definition of Reasonable force**

1. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.
2. Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.
3. 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
4. 'Control' means either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom.
5. 'Restraint' means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.
6. School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the pupil.

(Use of Reasonable Force, 2013, Department for Education).

*Any force used should always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result and should also be in relation to the age and physical size of the pupil. The force used must be in the best interests of the individual and for the least amount of time possible.*

*What determines the reasonableness of a particular intervention is whether or not it was proportionate to the circumstances that it was intended to prevent. (Team-Teach, 2016, p.28)*

### **Who can use reasonable force?**

- All members of school staff who have received training have a legal power to use reasonable force.
- This power applies to any member of staff at the school. It can also apply to people whom the headteacher has temporarily put in charge of pupils such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying students on a school organised visit.(Use of Reasonable Force, 2013, Department for Education)
- To be consistent with our Behaviour policy, all members of staff are authorised by the Headteacher and Governors to use reasonable force under the above circumstances; parents and voluntary helpers who may be helping either in school or on educational visits, must only use reasonable force in situations where there is a significant risk of injury either to an individual child, other children or themselves.

### **When can reasonable force be used?**

- Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- In a school, force maybe used for two main purposes –control or restraint.
- The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.
- All staff must be aware of the additional vulnerabilities for pupils with a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND), or those with a medical condition.

The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can and cannot be used. Schools can use reasonable force to:

- Remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so.
- Prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit.
- Prevent a pupil leaving the classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others.
- Prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground.
- Restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts. (Use of Reasonable Force, 2013, Department for Education)

#### **What staff cannot do:**

Under no circumstances should staff or authorised personnel act in a way that might deliberately cause injury, for example by:

- Holding a pupil by the neck, collar or any other way that might restrict breathing.
- Slapping, punching or kicking a pupil.
- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint.
- Tripping up a pupil.
- Holding a pupil by the hair or ear.
- Holding a pupil face down on the ground.
- Use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

### **3 Restraint**

Most physical interventions do not entail the use of restraint. If it is necessary for a member of staff to restrain a pupil, staff must make sure that:

- Air ways are not blocked.
- Breathing is not restricted by pressure to the abdomen or chest.
- Whenever possible, 2 members of staff to hold the pupil at each side, using caring 'C' holds to limit the risk of injury.

### **4 Injury**

Staff will always physically intervene in a way which minimizes the risk of injury to the pupil and themselves. However, there may be times when injuries are sustained. When a member of staff is aware that a pupil has sustained an injury, medical treatment will be offered and parents will be informed.

### **5 Withdrawal**

Withdrawal involves assisting a person to move away from a situation they are struggling to cope with to a safer or more comfortable place where they have a better chance of regaining their composure. (Team-Teach, 2016, p.24)

If a pupil is endangering themselves and/or others, staff will encourage the pupil to withdraw to a specified area to calm down. If the pupil does not respond to verbal encouragement and it is in his or her best interests to be removed from the situation, two members of staff may physically intervene to remove the child.

Two members of staff will stay with the pupil until they are calm enough not to pose a physical risk to themselves or others.

## **6 Seclusion**

Seclusion is forcing a pupil to spend time alone. (Team-Teach, 2016, p.24)

Priory Primary has a Calm Room, designed for pro-active calming and sensory needs. It may also be used, in exceptional circumstances, to help distract, divert or contain a pupil who is in a high arousal state, in order to keep them safe whilst they are calming down. They should never be left on their own.

However, Team-Teach states that:

- No employer can lawfully direct a member of staff to go into a room to be attacked and injured. While it would not be reasonable to hold a door shut in order to prevent somebody who wished to leave from doing so, it may be justifiable as a protection against personal attack.

Similarly, if there was good reason to believe a person would attack someone else if allowed to leave in a highly aroused state, then it may be reasonable to temporarily prevent them from doing so. (2016, p.25)

If it is necessary to stand outside the room, staff should observe the pupil at all times. As soon as the pupil is calm the door should be opened.

*If restraint and/or the use of seclusion are needing to be used for the same pupil more than once, then external advice should be sought as to whether an alternative placement is needed for the pupil. These measures should not be used routinely.*

## **7 Recording incidents**

It is important that staff immediately report every incident of **physical intervention** that takes place between themselves and a pupil, to the Headteacher or most senior member of staff in school at the time. If **restraint** has been used, this should be followed by using CPOMs. If the staff member does not have immediate access to CPOMs, they can capture the details of the incident by completing the proforma in Appendix A. This should subsequently be transferred to CPOMs.

### **7.1 Exceptions to recording**

If a pupil has their own individual risk assessment, which specifies the situations when physical intervention or restraint can be used, the use of physical restraint will only be recorded when it has happened during a situation not covered by the risk assessment.

If physical restraint takes place in the presence of a parent/guardian and they have given their permission, this does not need to be recorded. For example, when a child in Nursery or Reception does not want their parent to leave. It may be necessary for staff to hold the pupil so that the parent can walk away without the child running after them. Staff will discuss this with the parent before restraining the child.

### **7.2 Informing Parents**

Parents will be informed of every incident where physical restraint has taken place and will be given an opportunity to discuss the incident at the earliest possible convenience.

If physical intervention has had to be used more than once on a pupil, then an individual risk assessment and behaviour plan should be in place. This should be discussed with the

parents and the parents should be aware of the circumstances when physical intervention may need to take place.

## **8 Physical contact with pupils in other circumstances**

There are inevitably some other occasions when physical contact with children is necessary. In particular, physical contact may be necessary during PE or DT lessons, or if a member of staff has to give First aid. Staff may also need to comfort children who are upset or distressed, especially very young children.

All staff should be aware of the possible misinterpretation of actions such as this so, wherever possible, any such contact should only be used where another member of staff is present, or the contact made in such a way that it cannot be misinterpreted. Staff should be particularly aware of cultural and gender issues around physical contact.

Please also see the Behaviour Policy and Child Protection Policy for further guidance.

**Appendix A: Record of an incident of physical intervention to restrain a pupil**

Pupil Name:	Year Group:
Date of incident:	Time of incident:
Location:	Name/s of staff involved:
Witnesses:	Reason physical intervention used:
How did the incident begin?	Details of pupil behaviour:
Steps taken to calm/de-escalate situation:	What was said?
Nature of physical intervention (guiding/restraining)	Injuries to pupil? Medical treatment? Accepted/declined.
Injuries to staff? Medical treatment? Accepted/declined.	Parents informed:
Signature of staff:	Signature of parent/s: