



Use of Physical Intervention in Schools -

A guide for Parents and Carers

Information for parents on the use of physical intervention in schools

All school staff have safeguarding responsibilities as set out in the statutory guidance: **Keeping Children Safe in Education (DFE 2023)**. It is clear within this guidance that all school staff have the responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn. The school's behaviour policy should reflect this and is closely linked with safeguarding policies.

There are occasions when school staff will have cause to have physical contact with children and young people in an emergency, to avert danger to the child or young person, or others. The guidance produced by the Department for Education Use of Reasonable Force (DFE, 2013) states that: **“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 child or young person or prevent them taking action needed to prevent a child or young person causing harm.”**

The guidance **‘Use of Reasonable Force’ (DFE 2013)** is helpful and the following information is directly from this guidance.

What is reasonable force?

- 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 children and young people
- ‘Reasonable in the circumstances’ means using no more force than is needed

Who can use reasonable force?

- All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force

When can reasonable force be used?

- Reasonable force can be used to prevent children and young people from harming themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.

The Last Resort Principle

Schools should only use reasonable force when there is no realistic alternative. Schools should risk assess and think creatively about any alternatives to physical intervention which may be effective.

Schools should regularly review the effectiveness of strategies being used. Failing strategies should not be continued and alternative strategies or interventions should be considered and implemented to increase the likelihood of positive impact.’ Nor does it mean always waiting until the danger is imminent, by which time the prospect of safely managing it may be significantly reduced. National guidance is clear on this point.

It does mean we expect school staff to make risk assessments in the moment when considering a physical intervention and to reflect post incident to consider safer alternatives should the situation happen again.

Key Principles:

- Some pupils will require physical intervention to prevent them from causing harm or danger to others and/or themselves
 - Physical Intervention and Restraint should be used as a last resort to support children and young people in times of crisis. Restraint should be avoided wherever possible
 - Staff will continuously seek opportunities to communicate, assess the situation, look and listen and divert /de-escalate
 - Any physical intervention will be **REASONABLE, PROPORTIONATE AND NECESSARY** – in the pupil's and staff's best interest
 - It is good practice that parents/ carers will be contacted by the school when their child has been involved in physical intervention
 - Schools will work closely with parents and outside agencies in ensuring that pupils' needs are addressed and advice is considered and/or implemented.
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Physical restraint must:

- Never be entered into lightly
 - Involve the minimum force necessary
 - Be used to de-escalate a potentially dangerous situation
 - Be applied only until the immediate threat is past
 - Support the child/young person to maintain self-control
 - Not be used offensively as a threat or a punishment (aversive consequence) nor to inflict pain
 - Be administered calmly and rationally, not in response to anger or frustration
 - Be the result of a professional judgement about the young person's safety, taking account of the age and abilities of the young person
 - Be in the child/young person's best interests
 - Not be a substitute for a positive intervention/behaviour management programme
 - Be planned; an emergency response is only justified on the first occasion
 - Always be the last resort (i.e. means other than force were attempted and found to be insufficient).
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The following situations may legitimately require physical restraint as a response:

- Where there is risk of injury to pupils or staff
- Where there is risk of significant damage to property
- Where a young person is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline
- To prevent the committing of a criminal offence
- To prevent a pupil absconding
- Where there is significant disruption to others' education or well being.

Physical restraint should only be considered when:

- Calming and de-fusing strategies have failed to de-escalate the situation
- The response is in the paramount interests of the young person
- Not intervening is likely to result in more dangerous consequences than intervening.

Post Incident Support

Incidents that require use of restrictive physical interventions can be upsetting for children and young people, school staff involved and parents.

After incidents have subsided, it is important that the following is considered:

- Thoughts, feelings and emotions
- Emotional 'first aid'
- Physical check

Post incident reviews will focus on actions and behaviours:

- Who did what, when, why and how?
- What was the outcome?
- What does it tell us about what we already know about the young person?
- What have we learnt and what or how does this inform our practice?

When pupils/students are dysregulated and unable to control their emotions, physical intervention may be unavoidable. In these circumstances, it is the behaviour of the child or young person, which determines the degree of force required to bring them under control, which may lead to injury rather than the intention of the member of staff to cause harm.

If you are concerned about the use of physical intervention with your child, it is important to speak to school staff in the first instance. Schools will take seriously any concerns raised and investigate thoroughly.