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# Physical Intervention Policy

Adopted by Kings Education Trust

Updated September 2025

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Policy Level	Statutory Policy
Schools	The school has adopted this policy relative to its own context, this has been approved by Trustees and the Local Advisory Committee.
Other related policies and procedures:	Behaviour Policy, Equality Policy, PHSE Policy, Special Educational Needs Policy,



## Norfolk Steps Training

**“Step On”(De-escalation)** - ‘Step On’ is a therapeutic approach to behaviour management, with an emphasis on consistency, on teaching internal discipline rather than imposing external discipline and on care, not punishment. It uses techniques to de-escalate a situation before a crisis occurs and, where a crisis does occur, it adopts techniques to reduce the risk of harm.

**“Step Up” – (Restrictive physical intervention)** -provides training on elements of restrictive physical intervention (restraint) and personal safety. This training can only be provided within school where staff have already completed ‘Step On’ training and are still within certification.

### Introduction

At Waterside Primary Academy we believe that pupils need to be safe, to know how to behave safely, and to know that the adults around them are able to manage them safely and confidently. For some pupils the use of restrictive physical intervention will be needed to ensure this safety and to prevent harm. On such occasions, the restrictive physical intervention used must be reasonable, proportionate and necessary.

All school staff needs to feel that they are able to manage behaviour, and to have an understanding of what difficult or dangerous behaviours might be communicating. They need to know what options are available for managing behaviour, and they need to be free of undue worries about the risks of legal action against them if they use appropriate physical intervention. Parents need to know that their children are safe with us, and they need to be properly informed if their child is the subject of a Restrictive Physical Intervention, including the nature of the intervention, and the rationale for its use.

### Physical Intervention

“Physical intervention” (PI) is the term used to describe contact between staff and pupils where no force is involved. There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have contact or physical intervention (PI) with children, however, it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role and in relation to the pupil’s individual needs. There are occasions when staff may have cause to have physical intervention (PI) with pupils:

- To comfort a pupil in distress (so long as this is appropriate to their age and of limited duration)
  - To gently direct a pupil
  - For curricular reasons (for example in PE, Drama, etc)
  - First aid and medical treatment
  - In an emergency to avert danger to the pupil or pupils
  - In rare circumstances, when Restrictive Physical Intervention is warranted (See Below)
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Not all children feel comfortable about certain types of physical contact; this should be recognised and staff should be sensitive to any signs that they may be uncomfortable or embarrassed. Staff should acknowledge that some pupils are more comfortable with touch than others and/or may be more comfortable with touch from some adults than others. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and, so far as is possible, use a level of contact and/or form of communication which is acceptable to the pupil.

It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one pupil, in one set of circumstances, may be inappropriate in another, or with a different child. In all situations where physical contact between staff and pupils takes place, staff must consider the following:

- The pupil's age and level of understanding
- The pupil's individual characteristics and history
- The duration of contact
- The location where the contact takes place (it should not take place in private without others present or being aware.)

Physical contact must never be used as a punishment, or to inflict pain. All forms of corporal punishment are prohibited. Physical contact shall not be made with the pupil's neck, breasts, abdomen, genital area, or any other sensitive body areas, or to put pressure on joints. It must not become a habit between a member of staff and a particular pupil. Physical intervention should be in the pupil's best interest.

To reduce the risk of allegations, all staff should be aware of safer working practice and should be familiar with the guidance contained in the staff handbook, school code of conduct and staff behaviour policy.

Definition of "Restrictive physical intervention".

"Restrictive Physical Intervention" (RPI) is the term used to describe interventions where the use of force to control a person's behaviour is employed using bodily contact. It refers to any instance in which a member of staff has a duty to use "reasonable force" to control or restrain pupils in circumstances that meet the following legally defined criteria:

- To prevent a pupil from committing a criminal offence (this applies even if they are below the age of criminal responsibility).
  - To prevent a pupil from injuring self or others.
  - To prevent or stop a pupil from causing serious damage to property.
  - To prevent significant emotional harm (staff should consider first if it is safer and appropriate to move other pupils rather than use RPI).
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To prevent significant loss of learning for others (staff should consider first if it is safer and appropriate to move other pupils rather than use RPI).

There is no legal definition of “reasonable force”. However, there are two relevant considerations:

1. The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of an incident warrant it.
2. The degree of force must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or consequences it is intended to prevent.

Legal defence for the use of force is based on evidence that the action taken was:

- Reasonable, proportionate and necessary
- In the best interest of the young person

This document takes into account DfE Guidance on *Use of Reasonable Force* July 2013: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-inschools>

When the use of restrictive physical interventions may be appropriate at Waterside Primary Academy Restrictive Physical Interventions may be used when all other strategies have failed, and therefore only as a last resort. All staff should focus on de-escalation and preventative strategies rather than focusing solely on reactive strategies.

However there are other situations when restrictive physical intervention may be necessary, for example in a situation of clear danger or extreme urgency. Certain pupils may become distressed, agitated, and out of control, and need support with a brief Restrictive Physical Intervention that is un-resisted after a few seconds.

Who may use restrictive physical intervention in Waterside Primary Academy.

All staff who have received ‘Step up’ training and whose certification are up to date are authorised by the Head Teacher to use RPI, and must be aware of this policy and its implications. However, non-inclusion on this list does not mean that an adult is necessarily barred from using RPI. If the Head has lawfully placed an adult in charge of pupils then that adult will be entitled to use Restrictive Physical Intervention if it is reasonable, proportionate and necessary.

We take the view that staff should not be expected to put themselves in danger and that removing other pupils and themselves from risky situations may be the right thing to do. We value staff efforts to rectify what can be very difficult situations and in which they exercise their duty of care for the pupils.

Planning for the use of restrictive physical interventions in Waterside Primary Academy Staff will use the minimum force needed to restore safety and appropriate behaviour.

## **Elevated risks – To be Avoided**

The following can result in a sense of violation, pain or restricted breathing:

- The use of clothing to restrict movement
- Holding a person lying on their chest or back (there may be occasions when this is required to prevent harm, a small number of staff are trained in specialised techniques to do so safely).
- Pushing on the neck, chest or abdomen
- Hyper flexion or basket type holds
- Extending or flexing of joints (pulling and dragging)

The following can result in significant injury:

- Forcing a pupil up or down stairs
- Dragging a pupil from a confined space
- Lifting and carrying
- Seclusion, where a person is forced to spend time alone against their will (requires a court order except in an emergency)

The principles relating to Restrictive Physical intervention are as follows:

- Restrictive Physical Intervention is an act of care and control, not punishment. It is never used to force compliance with staff instructions
- Restrictive Physical Intervention will only be used in circumstances when one or more of the legal criteria for its use are met
- Staff will only use force when there are good grounds for believing that immediate action is necessary and that it is in the pupil's and/or other pupils' best interests for staff to intervene physically.
- Staff will take steps in advance to avoid the need for Restrictive Physical Intervention through dialogue and diversion unless emergency action is required.
- Staff will use the minimum force necessary to ensure safe outcomes
- Staff will be able to show that the intervention used was a reasonable response to the incident
- Every effort will be made to secure the presence of other staff, and these staff may act as assistants and/or witnesses
- As soon as it is safe, the Restrictive Physical Intervention will be relaxed to allow the pupil to regain self-control
- Escalation will be avoided at all costs, especially if it would make the overall situation more destructive and unmanageable
- The age, understanding, and competence of the individual pupil will always be taken into account
- In developing a risk management plan, consideration will be given to approaches appropriate to each pupil's circumstance
- Procedures are in place for supporting and debriefing pupils and staff after every incident of

- Restrictive Physical Intervention, as it is essential to safeguard the emotional well-being of all involved at these times.

## **Developing a Positive Behaviour Management Plan**

If a pupil is identified for whom it is felt that Restrictive Physical Intervention is likely to be required then a Positive Behaviour Management Plan (PBMP) will be in place. This Plan will help the pupil and staff to avoid difficult situations through understanding the factors that influence the behaviour and identifying the early warning signs that indicate foreseeable behaviours that may be developing. The plan will include some of the following:

- Involving parents/carers and pupils (where appropriate) to ensure they are clear about what specific action the school may take, when and why.
- Techniques for managing the pupil's behaviour i.e. strategies to de-escalate and promote self-regulation.
- Stating at which point a Restrictive Physical Intervention may be required.
- Where appropriate identifying key staff who know exactly what is expected
- Ensuring a system to summon additional support if required.
- A system for the plan being approved by a Norfolk Steps Tutor and a member of SLT.

Waterside Primary Academy caters for a wide range of pupil need and as a result the content of individual risk management plans can be extremely varied. Where a pupil has an individual PBMP staff should treat this document as policy. In some circumstances the contents of a PBMP may contradict information in other school policies. In this situation staff should follow the individual PBMP.

Please refer to the Appendix for an example risk management plan.

## **Recording and reporting**

The use of a Restrictive Physical Intervention, whether planned or unplanned (emergency) must always be recorded on CPOMS as quickly as practicable (and in any event on the same day as the incident) by the person(s) involved in the incident. The record should indicate:

- The names of the staff and pupils involved
- The reason for using a Restrictive Physical Intervention
- The type of Restrictive Physical Intervention employed
- The date and the duration of the intervention
- Whether the pupil or anyone else experienced injury or distress and, if they did, what action was taken
- A record of who informed parents/carers and when