

Positive Handling and Physical Intervention Policy

1.0 Policy Statement

- 1.1 Our school is committed to maintaining a safe, calm, and supportive environment in which pupils, staff, and visitors treat one another with respect and dignity. We believe in using preventative and de-escalation strategies to avoid the need for any physical intervention. Physical intervention or restrictive practice is only used when it is necessary, reasonable, proportionate and in the best interests of the child, in line with *Use of Reasonable Force and Other Restrictive Interventions in Schools (DfE, February 2025)*.
- 1.2 This policy reflects the updated DfE consultation guidance published February 2025. It also draws on Norfolk Steps (*Step On / Step Up*) principles — focusing on prevention, de-escalation, relational approaches, and positive behaviour planning — to minimise the use of restrictive practices.
- 1.3 This should be read together with the following policies:
- Behaviour and Inclusion
 - Safeguarding and Child Protection

2.0 Principles & Definitions

- 2.1 Legal Framework: Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, school staff are legally authorised to use *reasonable force* when it is necessary to maintain order, and protect pupils, and staff. This applies in situations such as preventing a pupil from:
- Hurting themselves or others (e.g. physical fights, self-harm)
 - Damaging property (e.g. school equipment, personal belongings)
 - Committing a criminal offence on school premises
 - Causing significant disruption to the learning environment
- 2.2 Supportive Physical Intervention (Low-Level Intervention): This is a form of positive handling that involves the least intrusive strategies to guide, reassure, or redirect a child. Examples include open hand gestures, light touch to guide, or standing alongside a pupil to help them feel safe. Supportive intervention is preventative and aims to avoid crisis.
- 2.3 Restrictive Physical Intervention (Step Up strategies): This is a last-resort strategy where trained staff use approved positive handling techniques to restrict a child's movement to keep them and others safe. Restrictive interventions must always be:
- Reasonable, proportionate, and necessary
 - Used for the shortest time possible
 - Followed by repair and reflection to rebuild relationships and support learning from the incident
- 2.4 Protective and Educational Consequences: In line with Norfolk Steps principles, consequences are not punishments.
- Protective consequences keep people safe in the moment (e.g. removal from an unsafe space, increased supervision).
 - Educational consequences help pupils learn and develop safer behaviours (e.g. reflection, restorative conversations, rehearsal of alternatives).

2.5 Professional Judgement and Individual Needs: All staff must use professional judgement when considering whether physical intervention is justified. This includes:

- Exploring alternative de-escalation strategies first
- Weighing the proportionality of the response
- Considering the impact on the pupil's welfare, including SEND, sensory, trauma, communication, or health needs

2.6 Positive Contact: Our school does not operate a "no contact" policy. Appropriate and proportionate physical contact may be necessary to guide, comfort, or protect children and young people, in line with Norfolk Steps practice.

3.0 Prevention, De-escalation and Early Intervention

3.1 In line with Norfolk Steps Step On training and the DfE guidance, staff should always use de-escalation techniques first, including calm stance, respectful verbal scripts, guided movement or escorting without force, offering space or a safe place to regulate, and removing bystanders or hazards.

3.2 Staff should be alert to early warning signs of distress or escalation, and intervene as early as possible with supportive strategies, to avoid crisis. The approach should emphasise pupil dignity, calm communication, choices and guided decision making.

3.3 Pupils with SEND, mental health or sensory needs may experience or interpret school routines and transitions differently. The school will endeavour to anticipate triggers and support pupils proactively, making reasonable adjustments and adapting the environment or routines to reduce the likelihood of escalation or restrictive intervention.

4.0 Risk Assessment, Individual Planning and SEND Considerations

4.1 For pupils with identified or potential risk of behaviours that harm or challenge, the school will create Risk Assessments and Positive Behaviour Support Plan. These should set out known triggers, signs of anxiety, de-escalation strategies, and any agreed positive handling strategies, including whether physical intervention might be used.

4.2 Plans should be developed collaboratively with parents/carers, and where relevant, specialist services. They must clearly state when and which restrictive interventions might be used. These plans should be reviewed periodically and after any incident.

4.3 Staff should be briefed on each pupil's plan, including *what to do and what not to do*, and when to seek additional help. Staff should also be aware of alternative communication strategies or sensory regulation techniques that may reduce the risk of escalation.

5.0 Staff training

5.1 All staff working with children should receive Norfolk Steps Step On training in de-escalation, relational approaches, and positive behaviour support. Training should include early recognition of escalation, trigger identification, escorted movement and guided support strategies, safe release and calming techniques, and post-incident reflection.

5.2 Identified staff should receive Norfolk Steps Step Up to equip them to use restrictive interventions safely when needed.

- 5.3 Training includes specific modules or content on *Use of Reasonable Force and Other Restrictive Interventions* (DfE, Feb 2025), including legal frameworks, human rights and equality considerations, SEND and trauma influences, and best practice in planning, recording, debriefing and review.
- 5.4 Refresher training should be regularly scheduled (at least every 2 years), and staff should be kept updated on any policy or guidance changes.
- 6.0 When Physical Intervention or Restrictive Practice May Be Used**
- 6.1 Physical intervention should only be used if a pupil is at immediate risk of harming themselves or others, or if there is a serious risk of disruption—and only when other approaches haven't worked or aren't possible at the time.
- 6.2 The intervention must be the least restrictive option possible: the minimum physical contact, for the shortest possible time, and with careful monitoring so that staff stop as soon as it is safe to do so.
- 6.3 Staff trained to undertake Norfolk Steps *Step Up* (or other accredited restrictive intervention training) may use planned physical holds, guided escorting or releases, but only as a last resort and where pre-identified in a pupil's plan or risk assessment. Any such plan must identify and specify the intervention and how and when it may be used.
- 6.4 In unplanned emergency situations in which no trained staff member is immediately available, any member of staff may act, but must use the minimum force necessary, act proportionately, and continue to follow the principles of this policy.
- 6.5 Under no circumstances should physical intervention be used as a form of punishment, to enforce compliance with instructions, or for disciplinary purposes.
- 7.0 Recording, Reporting, Debriefing and Review**
- 7.1 Recording of Force/Restrictive Intervention: The school must ensure that every *significant incident* involving the use of reasonable force is recorded as soon as practicable, using a *Physical Intervention Record Form* (see appendix 1). This should upload to MyConcern and linked to the relevant concern.
- 7.2 Reporting to Parents / Carers: The school must inform parents (or carers) of the incident "as soon as practicable". *This duty applies even when the intervention is included in a pupil's behaviour support plan.*
- 7.3 Post-Incident Medical Checks and Injury Recording: Any injuries to the pupil or staff should be checked and treated promptly; details recorded on Every.
- 7.4 Debriefing and Restorative Follow-Up: After any incident, follow-up conversations or debriefs should take place with both staff and pupil to reflect on the incident, to understand *what happened, why*, and to identify learning points. The debrief should be part of a wider review to support well-being and future prevention. Witnesses or nearby pupils should also be considered for follow-up support.
- 7.5 Review of Plans: The details of the incident should be used to review and, if necessary, revise the pupil's Risk Assessment or Positive Behaviour Support Plan. Reviews should consider what worked, what didn't, and possible adjustments to reduce future risk.



8.0 Complaints, Allegations and Governance

- 8.1 If a complaint is raised by a pupil, parent or carer regarding the use of reasonable force or any restrictive intervention, the school will investigate in line with its complaint's procedures.
- 8.2 Allegations that a member of staff has used force or restrictive practice inappropriately must follow the school's safeguarding procedures, including referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), and may trigger disciplinary or suspension procedures as per *Keeping Children Safe in Education*.
- 8.3 The governing body or proprietors will regularly review the policy and school practice, including data on the use of reasonable force and restrictive interventions, to ensure compliance, to identify trends, to ensure equity in use, and to inform staff training or policy adjustments.

9.0 Monitoring, Review and Policy Oversight

- 9.1 This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner if required by new legislation, statutory guidance.
- 9.2 The implementation of this policy will be monitored via review of incident records, debrief outcomes, staff feedback, pupil outcomes and patterns of behaviour, ensuring ongoing reflection, learning and improvement.
- 9.3 Governing bodies and senior leaders are responsible for ensuring that staff training is up to date, that policy is followed, and that there are mechanisms for regular scrutiny of incidents, follow-up actions, and pupil and staff wellbeing.

APPENDIX A

Physical Intervention Record Form

Name of child/ young person:		Year group	
School:			
SEN/ LAC/ Vulnerability			
Person completing form and designation			
Date and Time of incident		MyConcern number	

Staff involved

<i>Name</i>	<i>Norfolk Step Up or BehaviourSafe trained?</i>	<i>Involved: Physically (P) observer? (O)</i>	<i>Staff signature</i>

De-escalation strategies attempted

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Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) strategies used

Technique used, and length of hold	Reason for use of RPI

Review and Reflect

Does the behaviour support plan need to be reviewed because of this incident?	Yes	No
Does the risk assessment need to be reviewed because of this incident?	Yes	No
If yes, who will action and when?		
Who was the incident reported to, and when?		
Was there any first aid or medical intervention needed?	Yes	No
	Please ensure this is recorded on Every	

Debrief

Was the pupil debriefed?	Yes	No	Actions/ outcome:
Were staff offered a debrief?	Yes	No	Actions/ outcome:

Parents/carers were informed

Date	Time	By whom?

Signature:

Print name:

Date:

If further advice is required around any issues related to physical intervention or the completion of this form, please contact Gemma Bucklee g.bucklee@consortiumtrust.org.uk

**Document Control
Changes History**

Version	Date	Amended By	Details of Change
V2	01/12/2017	Principal/CEO	Language and terminology changes
V3	05/01/2018	Principal/CEO	Updating of referenced documents
V4	28/03/2019	ELM	Updating of LGB to LC (1.1 & 4.1), Updated SSP terminology
V5	02/04/2020	HOS WISA	Supplied additional clarity 2.3, 4.3 and 7.3 Referenced relevant documents 3.5 and appendix 4
V6	01/04/2021	HOS WISA	Removal of link to DfE not working. Added Appendix 2.1 reporting form
V7	26/01/2022	HOS WISA	Added a definition of the different types of Handling
V8	21/9/2022	Gemma Bucklee	Updated terminology in line with Bells Croft Training
V9	18/9/2023	HOS Inclusion	Review of document Inclusion of training by accredited provider, process for updating risk assessments and behaviour plans after an incident, aligning with ethos with behaviour and inclusion policy, and clarifying language around decision making and positive handling as a last resort.
V10	22/09/2025	Gemma Bucklee, HOS Inclusion	Amended policy in line with Norfolk Steps and updated government guidance issued in September 2025.

Approval

Name	Job Title	Signed	Date
Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne	Principal/CEO	Electronic signature	01/08/2016
Dawn Carman-Jones	On behalf of the Trust Board	Electronic signature	01/08/2016
Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne	Principal/CEO	Electronic signature	31/03/2022
Dawn Carman-Jones	On behalf of the Trust Board	Electronic signature	31/03/2022
Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne	Principal/CEO	Electronic signature	6/10/2022
Dawn Carman-Jones	On behalf of the Trust Board	Electronic signature	6/10/2022
Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne	CEO	Electronic signature	25/1/2024
Dawn Carman-Jones	On behalf of the Trust Board	Electronic signature	25/1/2024
Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne	CEO	Electronic signature	22/01/2026
Steve Martin	Chair of Trust Board	Electronic signature	22/01/2026

This policy will be reviewed annually by Head of Service Inclusion or as required by changes in legislation. At every review, this policy will be approved by the Education & Learning Board.

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