



HARLINGTON LOWER AND SUNDON LOWER SCHOOLS **TOUCH GUIDANCE AND RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS POLICY**

Approved by Curriculum Trustee Committee: February 2024

Revised due to new guidance (Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force in schools, April 2026)

Next review: February 2027



At Harlington and Sundon Lower Schools, we recognise the importance of adult interactions in helping build pupils' feelings of self-esteem, self-confidence, trust in others and joyful engagement. Staff use these interactions to nurture the emotional well-being of pupils, so that they are more able to learn, make friends, and achieve.

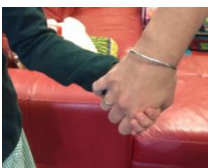
Listening to a pupil's needs is something staff will always take time to do. Whether being shown a "hurt" or a new pair of shoes, staff will take time to listen and react. With a "hurt" such as a cut or graze, staff may need to touch the area to clean it or apply a dressing. We may also use wet paper towels or a dry cotton wool ball to "make better" an imagined "hurt" so that our pupils know their concerns are being heard. We recognise that while interaction through touch is a positive experience for most, we always respect the individual comfort levels of every child.



WHY DO WE USE TOUCH?

Touch is a normal, healthy part of all human interaction. Physical touch can relieve stress, decrease anxiety and depression and increase comfort. We use touch primarily for comfort or nurture.

The School Hug: We encourage the use of a 'school hug' – a sideways-on hug with the adult putting their hands on the child's shoulders from the side rather than 'front on'.



Hand-Holding: We recognise that children sometimes enjoy being able to hold hands with adults around them. This is perfectly acceptable when the hand holding is compliant and usually would be when the child puts their hand into the adults' hand.

Lap-Sitting: At our school, our youngest pupils may attempt to sit on a lap if they are distressed. We tactfully encourage pupils to seek comfort/attention through other means, such as holding hands or a sideways hug, rather than sitting on laps or being picked up.

Lifting: At our school, the youngest pupils (especially Nursery aged pupils) may ask to be picked up. We tactfully encourage pupils to seek comfort/attention through other means, such as a sideways hug.

Theraplay®

At Harlington Lower and Sundon Lower we use Theraplay® as part of our school routine. This is an empirically proven approach to enhancing children's emotional well-being through a series of games and activities. Sessions are aimed at enhancing pupils' sense of attachment, their sense of self-esteem, their ability to trust in others, and to promote a sense of joyful engagement. The Theraplay®

model takes its roots from the natural patterns of healthy interaction between parent and child. Our sessions are adapted for teacher/pupil relationships and focus on four essential qualities: Structure, Engagement, Nurture, and Challenge. Theraplay® sessions create an active and affective connection between the child, other children and staff, promoting a sense of self as worthy and lovable, and of relationships being positive and rewarding.

We recognise that, whilst interaction through touch can be a positive experience for the pupils at our schools, not every child is comfortable with this. We always respect this and guide other pupils to be respectful with their friends who request this.

At all times our goal is to maintain the safety and meet the developmental needs of the child.

RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS AND REASONABLE FORCE

Who may use physical intervention?

In line with the *Education and Inspections Act 2006*, all staff members have the legal power to use **Reasonable Force** to prevent a pupil from:

- Injuring themselves or others.
- Committing a criminal offence.
- Causing damage to property.
- Engaging in behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline.

Determining Appropriateness

Before using a restrictive intervention, staff must assess:

1. **Is it Necessary?** Are there less restrictive ways to manage the situation?
2. **Is it Proportionate?** Is it the minimum force for the shortest time possible?
3. **Pupil Welfare:** Does the pupil have SEND, past trauma, or medical conditions that make restraint particularly distressing?

Avoiding the use of restrictive interventions

Except in cases where there is immediate danger we would normally try other ways of resolving or de-escalating a situation. These could include:

- using de-escalation strategies
- calmly re-stating the rules and expectations for the situation;
- removing other pupils from the situation and thus from danger of from being an audience;
- use of physical proximity, but not in a threatening way;
- use of physical 'space', giving the child enough room or space so that they feel less threatened or trapped by a situation
- encouraging the pupil to withdraw to a safer and calmer situation;
- Calling another adult for support or to take over.
- **Restraint that inflicts pain should never be used**
- **Restraint should never be used as a punishment**

Adults should remember that the following principles govern our management decisions:

- It is essential that adults remain objective and calm in both speech and actions, and listen and respond quietly to the pupil so as not to exacerbate the situation when managing disruptive children
- Staff should maintain positive attitudes that are constructive. Refer to previous achievements and promote self esteem

- Staff should clarify options and consequences with the child
- Staff should create diversionary activities wherever possible in order to dispel aggression and anger.

If more than minor physical intervention is judged to be necessary the teacher or adult in charge should;

- send for the assistance of another adult (for support or to take over, and as a witness);
- remove other pupils from the scene if possible;
- continue to talk calmly to the pupil explaining what will happen, and under what circumstances the physical intervention will cease (but not in a threatening way);
- use the minimum force necessary and cease the intervention as soon as it is judged safe;
- Not act punitively in any way verbally or physically.

In some circumstances we may consider it appropriate to call the police.

Acceptable Physical Interventions

Physical intervention is always a last resort.

It must be justified as appropriate by the circumstances. We use only the minimum force that is needed to restore safety or appropriate behaviour; and we take account of the age, understanding and gender of the pupil.

Acceptable forms of intervention in this school include:

- leading or guiding a pupil by the hand or arm, or shepherding them with a hand in the center of the back;
- holding a pupil who has lost control until they are calm and safe
- physically moving between and separating two pupils if possible;
- blocking a pupil's path;
- use of reasonable force to remove a weapon or dangerous object from a pupil's grasp;
- where there is immediate risk of injury, any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of 'reasonable force' — for example to prevent a pupil running into a busy road or hitting or hurting someone;

Staff may move, defend themselves, lead, restrain or block someone, bearing in mind the whole time their own safety as well as that of others and of the child who is the subject of any restraint or other intervention.

It is **unacceptable** and likely to be illegal or grounds for disciplinary action for staff to use any physical intervention designed to cause pain or injury including:

- any form of corporal punishment, slapping, punching or kicking;
- restricting the airway, breathing or circulation;
- holding by the neck or collar, or otherwise restricting the ability to breathe;
- holding by the hair or an ear;
- twisting or forcing limbs against a joint;
- tripping up a pupil or holding an arm out at neck or head height to stop them;
- holding a pupil face down on the ground or sitting on them;
- **shutting or locking a pupil in a room**, except in extreme situations whilst summoning support or preventing danger of injury (defined under 'seclusion' below).

Staff should also avoid touching or holding a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent.

It is **illegal** to use force as a punishment.

Seclusion

Seclusion (keeping a pupil confined alone and prevented from leaving) is a **non-disciplinary safety measure**. It is only used when a child is experiencing extreme dysregulation and poses an immediate risk to others.

- The child must be **supervised at all times**.
- The child must be allowed to leave as soon as the risk of harm reduces.
- The door must not be locked; however, adults may hold the door shut in order to maintain the safety of the child and others, if there is a reasonable threat that people would be hurt if the child left the room.

It is acceptable for doors to have double or high locks to ensure pupil safety, or for external doors to be locked for security purposes, if a member of staff is always with the pupils in such circumstances.

If a child is in a distressed where they are manifesting physical violence, they may be guided to a safe room where they can be calmed.

An adult will remain in the room with the child if possible. If this would put the adult in danger, they should remain just outside and ensure they are able to see the child and maintain their safety. This would occur for a reasonable time period, dependent on the time needed for the child to calm.

Throughout this period, adults would follow the child's individual behaviour plan strategies. If a child did not have one, a behaviour plan would be created after such an incident.

Searching, Screening, and Confiscation

In a Lower School, searches are rare.

Headteachers and staff authorised by the Headteacher have a statutory power to search a pupil of their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item. A member of staff can use such force as is reasonable to search for legally prohibited items, but not to search for items banned under the school rules only. This should always be overseen by the Headteacher in accordance with Searching, Screening and Confiscation, Advice for Schools, July 2022 ([Searching, Screening and Confiscation](#))

Prohibited items are:

- knives and weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- stolen items
- tobacco and cigarette papers
- fireworks
- pornographic images.
- any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be used:
 - to commit an offence, or
 - to cause personal injury to, or damage to property of; any person (including the pupil)

RECORDING AND REPORTING INCIDENTS OF RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTION

Recording incidents

Every incident involving force or seclusion **must** be recorded in writing on **CPOMs** as soon as practicable, and no later than the end of the school day. In addition to this, the staff member responsible should inform a senior member of staff as soon as possible. We acknowledge that such events are stressful for both pupils and staff and both parties will need time to recover, with the chance of de-briefing and resolving the situation.

A full written account of the incident should be made by the member of staff concerned and recorded on CPOMs under the label physical intervention.

Records must include:

- Name(s) of pupil(s) and staff involved, when and where the incident occurred. CPOMs will include the pupil's SEND status code.
- Names of staff or pupils who witnessed
- The reason why the intervention was assessed as necessary
- How the incident began and progressed, who said what, who did what
- What was done to calm things down
- What degree of force was used? What kind of hold, where and for how long?
- Pupil's response and the outcome of the incident
- Details of any injury to any person or damage to property

It must be recorded and dated by the member of staff. The Headteacher (or Deputy Headteacher in their absence) must add an action on CPOMs to record that they have read the record and countersign it. The Headteacher should

- discuss the incident with the pupil as soon as possible;
- interview staff involved and any other witnesses;
- inform the pupil's parents/carers and social worker if relevant;
- record any disagreements expressed by the pupil or adults about the event
- Take any appropriate further action, liaising with governors or unions as appropriate, and acting within the schools' safeguarding procedures.

We report incidents to the Chair of Governors in outline without identifying the pupil.

Reporting to Parents

The school **must** report each use of force or seclusion to the parents/carers as soon as practicable, and no later than the same day.

- Parents should be invited to a follow-up discussion to review the child's **Behaviour Support Plan**, or to create one if the child does not have one.

GOVERNANCE

The Role of Governors

The Local Governing Committee holds a statutory responsibility to oversee the use of restrictive interventions:

- Governors must regularly review anonymised data to identify trends, patterns, and the disproportionate impact on specific groups (e.g., pupils with SEND).
- Ensure the school environment minimises the need for force through proactive culture and staff training.
- Ensure staff involved in significant incidents receive debriefing and appropriate supervision/support.

PLANNING FOR RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTION

Where we think a pupil might require physical restraint we plan in advance and know who will do what. This planning includes helping pupils to avoid provoking situations, helping them find success and minimise frustration, and develops our own skills. It also helps us see better where we can head off difficulties when we spot them and preempt them early enough. A child friendly behaviour plan should be created. The plan should include:

- parents and the pupil views and to ensure that they are clear about what specific action the school might need to take;
- a risk assessment that considers carefully the likely outcomes to the pupil and others of undertaking intervention or not;
- managing the pupil (e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict, at what stage and what type of holds to be used):
- identifying key staff who should know exactly what action they should be taking. Any member of staff who may have to use a physical intervention should always be fully briefed about the child in question, and it is best if they are well known to the child.
- ensuring that additional support can be summoned if appropriate;
- identifying training needs and updates.

TRAINING

We are clear that training of staff is vital in this area. All staff (not just teachers) are given general training on behaviour management. Staff are also offered supervision to deal with difficult events, as in our Safeguarding Policy.

If the need arises, staff will be trained with certified Team Teach accreditation for staff using such techniques.

COMPLAINTS

We hope that by adopting this policy and keeping parents well informed should help to avoid the need for complaints. Any disputes that do arise about the use of force by a member of staff should be dealt with in accordance with the schools' safeguarding procedures, a copy of which is available on the school websites. This could in some circumstances lead to an investigation by police and social services.

Complaints about this policy should be directed to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors.

REFERENCES

Searching, screening and confiscation: guidance for schools, July 2022, [Searching, screening and confiscation in schools - GOV.UK](#)

Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools: Guidance for schools in England, April 2026. [Use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions guidance](#)

SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years, September 2024, [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK](#)

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