PACE Academy Trust

De-Escalation and Physical Restraint Policy

Spring 2026

Article 19 - Children must be protected from all forms of physical or emotional harm, abuse, or mistreatment, including during behaviour management interventions.

Article 37 - Children must be treated with humanity and respect and protected from degrading treatment.

Article 12 - Children have the right to express their views, and those views should be taken seriously.

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De-escalation and Physical Restraint

It is recognised that the vast majority of pupils in our schools respond positively to the behaviour expectations set out in this policy. The well-being, welfare and safety of all pupils and staff at Chipstead Valley Primary School is of paramount importance. It is acknowledged however, that in exceptional circumstances, staff may need to take action in situations where de-escalation and physical restraint techniques may be required to keep children and adults safe.

Chipstead Valley Primary School acknowledges that the use of reasonable force is only one of several strategies available to ensure pupil safety, promote well-being, and maintain good order and discipline. The use of reasonable force should always be considered a measure of last resort, employed only when other interventions have been deemed ineffective or inappropriate in the circumstances. Chipstead Valley Primary School does not support the routine use of physical interventions, and all staff clearly understand that it is unlawful to use force as a punishment in any circumstance.

Chipstead Valley Primary School has a hierarchy of response to support children who display challenging behaviours, including:

- Adjustments to the environment in which children are taught to address factors that are likely to increase the likelihood of a child displaying challenging behaviour.
- Deployment of strategies and techniques to de-escalate or calm situations. These behaviour plans will be appropriate to the child and take account of their views.
- Use of appropriate external expertise, when needed.

Legal Framework for Physical Restraint

Physical restraint must be limited to emergency situations and used only as a last resort when all other strategies have been exhausted or are deemed inappropriate. Its application must always be reasonable, proportionate, and in line with safeguarding principles.

This policy is informed by Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which empowers school staff to use reasonable force, alongside section 93A of the same act, which introduces statutory duties for recording and reporting the same use of force from April 2026. It should also read alongside the DfE guidance 'Use of Reasonable Force in Schools – Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies'

Use of reasonable force in schools - GOV.UK

In accordance with statutory guidance 'Use of Reasonable Force,' teachers and other authorised members of staff may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a pupil from:

- Committing an offence
- Causing personal injury to themselves or others, or causing serious damage to property
- Engaging in behaviour that is prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among its pupils, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

Furthermore, Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children must be protected from all forms of physical and mental violence, which includes the inappropriate use of physical restraint, within families, schools, and other institutions.

All interventions must prioritise the safety, dignity, and rights of the child, and should be documented and reported in accordance with school procedures.

What does it mean to restrain a child?

Physical restraint refers to the controlled and positive application of reasonable force with the primary intention of preventing a child from causing harm to themselves, to others, or from causing serious damage to property. The use of physical restraint must always be proportionate, necessary, and in the best interests of the child.

The appropriate use of physical restraint requires professional skill, sound judgement, and a clear understanding of approved, non-harmful techniques. Staff must ensure that any intervention prioritises the safety, dignity, and well-being of the child always.

Physical restraint uses the minimum degree of force necessary for the shortest period of time to prevent a pupil harming themselves or others. The scale and nature of any physical intervention must be proportionate to both the behaviour of the individual to be controlled, and the nature of the harm they might cause.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff in school:

• Clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where reasonable force is necessary.
• Are provided with appropriate training to deal with difficult situations.

De-escalation

Staff consistently use positive strategies to encourage acceptable behaviour. Every effort will be made to resolve conflicts or examples of inappropriate/unacceptable behaviour positively. Staff should be able to justify that strategies other than reasonable force have been attempted and proved ineffective or would have been impractical. Furthermore, staff should recognise that restraint is only a small part of a wider spectrum of positive behaviour strategies.

Behaviours that may precede a child reaching the point of requiring physical intervention include:

- Child displays signs of anxiety
- Hiding face in hands, crouched down or under a table
- Pulling up collar or jumper, pulling down hat
- Rocking or tapping
- Withdrawing from the group
- Refusing to speak, dismissive
- Refusing to co-operate
- Adopting defensive postures
- Pupils dilate

De-escalation approaches at this point:

- Use of appropriate humour
- Consideration of the tone, volume and pace of spoken words (low, slow and quiet)
- Display a CALM stance, posture and body language
- Consider your facial expression
- Careful use of words

- Offer reassurances, including physical prompts
- Reminders of successes
- Diversion, i.e., introducing another activity to topic
- Be reliable, predictable and safe

Escalated behaviour cues:

- Further increase in tension/anxiety
- Abusive / belligerent
- Offensive remarks
- Aggressive postures
- Raised voice / shouting
- Eye contact changes
- Low level destruction
- Challenges, e.g. “You can’t make me…,” “I will not…”
- Defiance
- Pacing

Additional De-escalation approaches at this point:

- State desired behaviours clearly and calmly, ending with a “thank you” in expectation, rather than “please”
- Set clear, enforceable limits (including making use of class and school systems, traffic lights and reflection room)
- Give alternatives, offer a choice
- Provide an option to get out with dignity
- Risk-assess the immediate environment, consider making it safer.
- Get help from other members of staff

Consideration of these strategies should be maintained during and after the need for physical contact.

As soon as it is safe, any hold or restraint should be gradually relaxed to allow the pupil to regain self-control.

The pupil should be informed about what will happen next and be offered reassurance and encouragement to remain calm. In this way, the pupil will be more likely to see the restraint as an act of care.

When might it be appropriate to use reasonable force?

Examples of situations:

- A pupil attacks a member of staff, or another pupil.
- Pupils fighting.
- A pupil is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials, substances or objects.
- A pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave school (NB this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school).

What staff must remember when using physical restraint

All teachers need to be aware of strategies and techniques for dealing with difficult pupils and steps which they can take to defuse and calm a situation.

- Move calmly and confidently.
- Make simple, clear statements.
- Intervene early.
- Try to maintain eye contact.
- If necessary, request help before the problem escalates.
- Remove audience from the immediate location.

There are situations where staff should not intervene without help and Assistance should be sought when dealing with:

- An older pupil
- A physically large pupil
- More than one pupil, or
- When the teacher believes that they may be at risk of injury.

In circumstances where the member of staff has decided that it is not appropriate to restrain the pupil without help, they should:

- Remove other pupils who might be at risk
- Request assistance from colleagues
- Where necessary, telephone the police
- Inform the pupil(s) that help will be arriving
- Until support arrives, the members of staff should continue to attempt to defuse the situation orally and try to prevent the incident from escalating.

Recording

Staff should record all incidents of restraint in accordance with School Policy and report these to the Headteacher (See Appendix 1).

Details should include:

- Name of pupil(s)
- Staff member(s) involved
- Factors necessitating physical intervention
- The strategies which were used prior to using physical intervention
- Which physical restraint strategies were used and the outcome of restraint
- Any other action taken in the management of the incident

Parents/carers should be contacted as soon as possible and the incident explained to them. This action should also be recorded.

Appendix 1 - School Reporting Form

PACE Academy Trust

Physical Restraint Incident Report Forms - Part 1 and Part 2

Please complete these immediately after the incident and no later than 24hours afterwards.

Pupil Name:		Date of Birth:	
Incident:			
Adults Involved:			
Other Pupils Involved:			
Witnesses to Incident:			
Day, date and time of incident:		Place of incident:	

Events leading to incident (what was happening to the pupil before the incident, what triggered the behaviour, who else was involved or present?)

Behaviour of the pupil

Response from adults (which techniques did you use to reduce the dysregulation before the restraint and what was the response from the pupil and others?)

Reason for the restraint (what was the specific risk to the welfare of the pupil or others?)

Description of the restraint (what method or type of hold did you use and were there any complications which arose during the restraint?)	
How long did the restraint last?	

Conclusion/Reflection of the restraint (how did the restraint end, what help and support did you offer the pupil?)

Completed by:		
Signature:		Date:

Physical Restraint Incident Report Form - Part 2

Injuries			
Was the pupil injured?	Yes	No	If so, what were the injuries?
If yes how were these injuries sustained?			
Was a member of staff injured?	Yes	No	If yes what were the injuries?
If yes how were these injuries sustained?			
Did someone need medical help?	Yes	No	
Was first aid given?	Yes	No	
If yes what first aid was given?			
Was an accident form completed?	Yes	No	

Were the police involved?	Yes	No	
If yes please say why, who called and when, and the outcome.			

Who was told about the restraint?			
	Name	Date	Time
Appropriate manager			
Parent			
Social Worker (If applicable)			
Police			
Other			

Does a behaviour plan or risk assessment to be written or changed?	Yes		No	

Completed by:			
Signature:		Date	

Signatures:			
	Print name:	Signature:	Date:
Staff Involved			

Witnesses to the incident			
Pupil			
Class teacher			
Headteacher			
Parent			
Other			