

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 deescalation 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 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools' (DfE, April 2026).
- 1.2 This policy reflects the updated DfE guidance 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools' April 2026. 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 Legal Framework

- 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:
 - Causing injury to themselves or others
 - Committing a criminal offence
 - Damaging property
 - Causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

3.0 Key Definitions

- 3.1 *Restrictive intervention*: a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. 'Restrictive interventions' is the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways.
- 3.2 *Reasonable force*: a term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.
- 3.3 *Significant incident*: any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff as described within this policy (see section 4). This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention
- 3.4 *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. Where these low-level interventions are used with force they will be considered as a '*significant incident*'.
- 3.5 *Restraint (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.

3.6 Any 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

3.7 *Seclusion*: A non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and preventing them from leaving either by physical obstruction or blocking.

4.0 Other Physical Contact with Pupils

4.1 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. Examples might include to give first aid, to guide or escort pupils including when helping a pupil to a space they have chosen to access to self-regulate (without force).

4.2 In line with DfE guidance, we will not grant any requests by parents or staff members not to use reasonable force and/ or other restrictive interventions.

5.0 Prevention and Early Intervention

5.1 At a whole school level, we will ensure that the learning environment supports all pupils to achieve and thrive through consistent, and inclusive practice in line with the Trust’s Behaviour and Inclusion Policy.

5.2 We recognise that some children and young people with SEND may respond to distressing, overwhelming or unfamiliar situations by displaying behaviours that may place themselves or others at risk. These responses may be linked to factors such as pain, sensory overload, communication difficulties, or heightened anxiety. We also acknowledge that pupils who are non-verbal, or who find verbal communication challenging, may express their needs, emotions and distress through their actions. The school will proactively seek to identify potential triggers and provide appropriate support, making reasonable adjustments and adapting environments, routines and expectations to reduce the likelihood of escalation and the need for restrictive intervention.

5.3 For pupils who present an identified or potential risk of behaviours that may be harm, or challenge, the school will develop individual Risk Assessments and Positive Behaviour Support Plans. These documents will outline known triggers, early warning signs, preferred de-escalation strategies, agreed support approaches, and any positive handling techniques, including whether physical intervention may be used. An audit of need will be used to support the planning of physical intervention techniques (see appendix 2). Staff must also consider the impact of any restrictive intervention on a pupil’s overall welfare, taking into account individual needs, vulnerabilities and past experiences. Care should be taken where pupils have experienced trauma, have medical conditions, sensory impairments, communication difficulties, or other additional needs.

5.4 Plans will be developed collaboratively with parents/carers and, where appropriate, external professionals and specialist services. They will clearly specify the circumstances in which restrictive interventions may be used. Plans will be reviewed regularly and following any significant incident. Planned techniques should be shared with parents.

5.5 All relevant staff will be fully briefed on each pupil’s plan, including appropriate responses, actions to avoid, and procedures for seeking additional support. Staff will also be informed of effective communication approaches and sensory regulation strategies that may help reduce anxiety and prevent escalation.

6.0 When Restrictive Intervention (including use of reasonable force, seclusion and restraint) May Be Used

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 When considering the use of any restrictive intervention (including use of reasonable force and restraint) staff must carefully assess whether it is both necessary and proportionate in the circumstances.

Is it necessary?

- Staff will always consider whether alternative, less restrictive strategies are available and likely to be effective.
- Staff must evaluate whether the proposed intervention is likely to reduce risk, or whether it may escalate the situation or cause greater harm than the behaviour itself.
- Wherever possible, staff should communicate with one another to agree a coordinated and consistent response.

Is it proportionate?

- Staff must use the least restrictive option available, applying the minimum level of physical contact and force for the shortest possible time.
 - Any intervention must be carefully monitored and reduced or discontinued as soon as it is safe to do so.
 - Staff must continually review the situation and adapt their approach in response to changes in risk.
- 6.4 Staff must maintain the pupil's dignity, including considering the environment in which an intervention takes place. Wherever possible, clear, calm communication should be used to explain what is happening and what is expected. Appropriate verbal and non-verbal strategies should support understanding, and staff should remain responsive to the pupil's emotional state, adjusting or ending the intervention when it is safe to do so.
 - 6.5 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.
 - 6.6 Under no circumstances should physical intervention be used as a form of punishment, to enforce compliance with instructions, or for disciplinary purposes.
 - 6.7 The following techniques would be recorded as a 'significant incident' (see section 9 for further information around recording and reporting)

Guides/ Escorts (when used with force)	Restraint
Open hand guide Shoulder hug Arm Hug Paired guided harm hug	Paired elbow tuck Single elbow tuck Braced elbow tuck Lone worker Release from wrist grab Release from clothing grab Release from hair grab Release from neck grab Shield Escort Figure of four Seated figure of four Bite Release

7.0 Seclusion

- 7.1 Seclusion is an intervention where a pupil is confined in a place away from others and prevented from leaving. The DfE guidance states that this may be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation.
- 7.2 In line with Norfolk Steps, the Trust does not promote the practice of placing pupils in a room alone, that they cannot get out of, as a behaviour management strategy. The Trust does acknowledge and is clear that there may be exceptional circumstances where schools need to use seclusion where the risk of harm cannot be mitigated by any other means. As soon as the risk of harm has reduced, the pupil should be allowed to leave.

8.0 Staff training

- 8.1 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. There will be clear guidance around recording and reporting duties.
- 8.2 Identified staff should receive Norfolk Steps Step Up to equip them to use restraint safely when needed.
- 8.3 Training includes specific modules or content on 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools' (DfE, April 2026), including legal frameworks, human rights and equality considerations, SEND and trauma influences, and best practice in planning, recording, debriefing and review.
- 8.4 Refresher training should be regularly scheduled (at least every 2 years), and staff should be kept updated on any policy or guidance changes.

9.0 Recording, Reporting, Debriefing and Review

- 9.1 Recording: The school must ensure that every *significant incident*. This will include guides/ escorts used with force, restraints and seclusion. Staff should record using *the Restrictive Intervention Record Form (see appendix 1) / the incident template on CPOMS*. Any paper forms should be uploaded to school's recording system. It should be recorded by the staff member(s) on the day of the incident.
- 9.2 Reporting to Parents / Carers: The school must inform parents (or carers) in writing of any significant incident on the same day. This duty applies even when the intervention is included in a pupil's

behaviour support plan. Information should include the time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention, brief account of why the intervention was necessary, the type and degree of force, and any injuries sustained (This can be completed through the template on Evidence for Learning/ the letter template (appendix 3). Where a restraint has been used a telephone call should also be made to parent/carers.

- 9.3 Post-Incident Checks and Injury Recording: Any injuries to the pupil or staff should be checked and treated promptly; details recorded on Every. Norfolk Steps techniques seek to avoid injury to the pupil, however it is possible that accidental and non-intentional bruising or scratching can occur as an unfortunate out come when trying to maintain safety. Such outcomes are not necessarily an indicator of misappropriation of the technique. Full evaluation and review of such outcomes will be undertaken by personnel from the senior leadership team.
- 9.4 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.
- 9.5 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. Best practice would include inviting parents to this discussion.

10.0 Complaints, Allegations and Governance

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 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*.
- 10.3 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.

11.0 Monitoring, Review and Policy Oversight

- 11.1 This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner if required by new legislation, statutory guidance.
- 11.2 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.
- 11.3 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 1
Restrictive Intervention Record Form

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

Staff involved

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

De-escalation strategies attempted

Restrictive Intervention strategies used (including use of force in guides/ escorts, seclusion and restraint)

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

Review and Reflect

Please review the behaviour support plan. Does the behaviour support plan need to be amended because of this incident?	Yes	No
Please review the behaviour support plan. 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 verbally and in writing

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>By whom?</i>

Signature:

Print name:

Date:

APPENDIX 2



Audit of Need

Planning for restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force

Name of CYP:	Adults involved in auditing need:	Date completed:
Justification – what is the harm that will be prevented?		
Is there a current behaviour support plan in place?		
Has behaviour been tracked (eg through observation grids/behaviour tracker)?		
Has behaviour been analysed (eg through Roots and Fruits).		
Physical characteristics – any height, weight, physical differences that staff should be aware of?		
Additional risk factors - medical or emotional diagnosis or needs, substance misuse etc		
Communication differences (eg. visual/hearing impairment, adaptive communication).		
Does any reasonable adjustment need to be made to ensure staff matching?		
Environmental changes that may reduce risk.		
Preferred restrictive intervention to hold CYP – standing/sitting/kneeling/small person/in chairs/lone worker/figure of four/braced elbow tuck/shield		
Behaviours whilst holding that may occur (eg. spitting/headbutting/kicking/dropping).		
Any additional information.		

APPENDIX 3
REASONABLE, PROPORTIONATE, NECESSARY
LAST RESORT
TO PREVENT HARM

INSERT SCHOOL NAME, ADDRESS, DATE AND LOGO

Dear **[insert parent / carer name]**

Further to our conversation, here are the details of the recent incident involving your child:

Date, time and location of the incident	<i>Insert the date, time and location of the incident</i>
Details of the incident	<i>Give a brief description of the incident, the type of physical intervention, why it was necessary in that instance and any physical injuries sustained</i>

We understand that this may be worrying or upsetting for you and your family. Please be reassured that the safety and wellbeing of your child is always our priority and physical interventions are only used as a last resort in order to keep everyone safe.

We will now review your child's behaviour support plan to see what steps we can take to reduce the likelihood of this happening again and find the best ways to support your child moving forward. We will always discuss any changes we will be making with you.

If you have any concerns about your child's wellbeing as a result of this incident, or want to ask any questions, please do get in contact. If you are worried about your child's health, especially in relation to any physical symptoms, please contact your doctor immediately.

Yours sincerely

[add staff member / head teacher's name]

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.
V11	11/2/2026	Gemma Bucklee, HOS Inclusion	Amended policy with published guidance, DfE April 2026

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
Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne	CEO	Electronic signature	30/04/2026
Steve Martin	Chair of Trust Board	Electronic signature	30/04/2026

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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