

Coulsdon C of E Primary School



Physical Intervention and Positive Handling

The ethos of this school is to enable every child to learn and develop in a Christian environment. We ask all parents of whatever faith applying for a place here to recognise and support this ethos and its importance to the school.

Together, growing in mind, body and spirit

*Approved November 2025
Next Review September 2027
or sooner if required*

Physical Intervention & Positive Handling

Introduction

Coulsdon C of E Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all its pupils. The Governors expect personnel to share this commitment by demonstrating their understanding of how each individual adult working on behalf of the school has an active part to play in protecting children from harm and promoting their welfare.

At Coulsdon C of E school we are proud of the positive relationships which are created between the children and adults in our school community. This reflects the Christian values of love, care and forgiveness. However, there are rare occasions whilst building up these relationships of trust and common understanding, where problems may arise. Unfortunately, for reasons of safety there may be times where reasonable force needs to be used to restrain or control a child.

To ensure the safety of staff and children it is important that all personnel and volunteers at Coulsdon C of E Primary School read and follow this policy and any other guidance for individual children. Appropriate training will be provided by the Senior Leadership Team.

What do we mean by Physical Intervention?

Physical intervention by staff can take several forms. It could involve:

- Physically placing oneself between pupils
- Blocking a pupil's path
- Leading a pupil by the hand
- Holding
- Shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back
- Removing shoes if child has kicked or attempted to kick person or property
- Removing property that is dangerous or prohibited
- Placing child in a time out room or other restricted space
- Removing a child from the area of conflict using positive handling techniques

At times Positive Handling/Physical Intervention may require reasonable force. What is reasonable force?

The DfE cannot offer a legal definition of "reasonable force" but states that it will always depend on all the circumstances of the case.

The following factors need to be considered:

- The circumstances of any particular incident must warrant the use of force; if the incident could be resolved without the use of force, then the adults involved should always endeavour to do so.
- The degree of force employed must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident, and force used should always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result.

- Consideration needs to be given to the age, understanding and gender of pupils and if they have additional needs.

Circumstances in which authorised persons may use reasonable force

The DfE states that School staff can use reasonable force to control or restrain a pupil in specific circumstances. (Use of reasonable force Guidance, 2013). When an individual is:

- Causing disorder
- Causing harm to themselves or others;
- Causing damage to property (including the child's own property);

These circumstances might happen on the school premises or elsewhere such as an educational trip or any other out of school activity.

Some examples of circumstances which may warrant physical intervention as an appropriate or necessary response are when:

- Children are fighting;
- A child is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, rough play or by the misuse of dangerous materials or objects.
- A child is engaged in, or on the verge of committing deliberate damage or vandalism to property
- A child is running in a corridor in a way in which s/he might have or cause an accident likely to injure him/herself or another child
- A child persistently refuses to obey a request to leave the classroom
- A child is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting the session/lesson
- A child absconds from a class or tries to leave the building and puts him/herself at risk
- A child attacks a member of staff, public or other pupil

All personnel have the right to defend themselves against an attack as long as they do not use a disproportionate degree of force to do so.

Authorised staff

Although all personnel have the legal power to use reasonable force, at Coulsdon C of E Primary this should only happen when essential and all other de-escalation strategies have not worked. Primarily a member of the SLT or class teacher should take responsibility. Other personnel should only take responsibility in the case of an emergency when immediate action is required.

Escorting and Holding

The most commonly used forms of physical intervention are escorting and holding. These depend upon the degree of compliance from the child as to whether they constitute 'restrictive'. The development of trusting, confident relationships is of high priority so that children are accepting of the use of the friendly escort and calming holding to support their own efforts to manage their behaviour. These positive handling holds rarely need force and are not 'Restraint'.

Restrictive Physical Intervention

School staff will only use R.P.I. as opposed to holding or escorting as the last resort after:

- Appropriate de-escalation techniques have failed to help the child to control him/herself;
OR
- Instant risk assessment by staff lead them to believe that injury, or serious damage to property, is an immediate danger; OR
- Knowledge of the child's history and behaviour pattern leads staff to believe that speedy removal from the room is necessary to prevent escalation or breakdown of the session or other pupils behaving in a similar manner. AND
- The pupil has been cautioned that his/her continued choice of behaviour may lead to restraint.

Restraint Procedures

- Send for a member of the SLT, (or another teacher for assistance).
- Wherever practicable, tell the child to stop and what the consequences will be if s/he does not
- Continue to communicate with the child throughout the incident and make it clear that the physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as the unacceptable behaviour stops
- Remain calm and never give the impression that you have acted in temper, frustration or anger or to punish the child
- If possible remove other children who might be at risk and send for help
- Tell the child that you have sent for help and continue to try to defuse the situation through talk and try to stop the incident from escalating
- In extreme cases, ask for the Police to be called.

The important factor in any situation of unacceptable behaviour from children is to use physical restraint **only after all other strategies have failed**. Added to this, as the aim is to maintain good order and discipline any action that could exacerbate a situation needs to be avoided. Physical intervention could result in increasing the disruption and very importantly could provoke an attack on the staff member.

Recording incidents

It is important that a written record is kept in the school's child protection online management system (CPOMS) when physical force is used to manage an incident. This will help to prevent any misunderstanding or misinterpretation, and will help in case of complaint. Staff should inform the SLT immediately after such incidents. A written report of the incident should be written up and signed by a witness when possible.

Parents need to be informed of the incident. The SLT should always be involved in this.

Dealing with Complaints

Parents/carers must be informed by telephone or preferably in person of serious incidents of challenging behaviour necessitating R.P.I. This is the first opportunity for parents/carers to discuss any concerns they might have.

If the parent/carer or child remains anxious, an appointment can be made to discuss the incident with the staff concerned and/or the SLT. At this point, written records and other evidence may be consulted and shared with the parent/carer to help him/her to understand the facts. Presented with the evidence, parents/carers are enabled to see that procedures are followed and actions justified. The pupil concerned will also now, having been given the chance to re-evaluate and accept what has happened, in all likelihood confirm the facts postulated by staff and reassure the parent/carer.

If the situation cannot be resolved through informal discussion, the parent/carer may make an official complaint which will be investigated according to Croydon LA procedures.

Physical contact with children in other circumstances:

- When a pupil is being congratulated or praised
- When comforting a distressed pupil
- Holding the hand of a child
- To demonstrate exercises, techniques or give support during P.E. lessons and individual music lessons;
- To administer First Aid;
- Children with SEND may need staff to provide physical prompts or help; or when implementing OT advice
- Where a child is distressed and needs comforting;

Staff will use their own professional judgement when they feel children are in need of these kinds of support.

It is also important to bear in mind that some children will find touching unwelcome e.g. for cultural reasons, they might have suffered abuse or be on the Autistic spectrum.

Policy Review

This policy is to be read in conjunction with all other school policies, in particular the Behaviour Policy, Intimate Care Policy and Safeguarding Policy.