



Mid Essex Anglican Academy Trust

To unlock every child's potential as a unique child of God
Respect – Forgiveness – Trust – Responsibility – Thankfulness – Justice – Humility



Physical Intervention Policy

Ratified: March 2026

Review due: Spring 2028

Mission Statement:

Unlock every child's potential as a unique child of God

Our aim is to ensure that every child's unique strengths are celebrated and strengthened alongside gaining an excellent academic, social, emotional and physical education.

Introduction

This policy should be read in conjunction with the schools' Behaviour Policies and Trust's Appropriate Touch policy.

At the Mid Essex Anglican Academy Trust, we take seriously our duty of care towards pupils, employees and visitors. Touch is a sensitive issue requiring careful judgement. Therefore, in order to safeguard young people and staff it is important to provide clear guidance and appropriate training within the resources that can reasonably be made available.

The Children Act 2004, places a duty upon staff to consider the welfare of the child first, and for the welfare of the child to take precedence, when practical, over every other consideration. All physical interventions, including restraint, are conducted within a framework of positive behaviour management. Our approach to supporting pupils to find strategies to manage their own behaviour ensures that all pupils:

- are treated fairly with courtesy and respect;
- can lead an independent life and are enabled to do so;
- are helped to make choices and are involved in decisions which affect their lives, consistent with their interests, culture and well-being;
- are entitled to the protection of the law;
- have their rights upheld regardless of their ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, impairment, disability or age; and
- are encouraged to develop an awareness of their rights and responsibilities, and to respect the rights of others.

Legal Framework

Reasonable Force

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 enables school staff to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- Committing any offence (or, for a pupil under the age of criminal responsibility, what would be an offence for an older pupil);
- Causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil themselves); or
- Prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any pupils receiving education at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

There is no legal definition of when it is reasonable to use force. That will always depend on the precise circumstances of individual cases. To be judged lawful, the degree of force employed must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or the consequences it is intended to prevent. The degree of force and the duration of its application should always be the minimum needed, as the use of any degree of force is unlawful if the particular circumstances do not warrant such use. Therefore physical force could not be justified to prevent a pupil from committing a trivial misdemeanor, or in a situation that clearly could be resolved without force. Justification also includes the right of every citizen to 'self defense', which applies in all situations and for all staff and pupils.

For example, it is an offence to lock an adult or child in a room without a court order (even if they are not aware that they are locked in) except in an emergency when the use of a locked room as a temporary measure while seeking assistance may provide legal justification. Therefore, this is an issue of proportion and circumstance which needs to be assessed and acted upon at the time.

Justification (as a legal defense) for using physical interventions needs to address these questions:

- Is there clarity about how the intervention helps the person concerned?
- Are there any conflicts of interest where staff experience fewer demands or less stress when physical interventions are used?
- What steps have been taken to reduce the likelihood that the physical intervention will be used in the future?
- Is the justification for this pupil specifically, or for 'all' in group?

The clearest lawful justification is that the actions of staff are **reasonable, proportionate and in the best interests of the young person**. Under Human Rights legislation they should be “absolutely necessary”. Staff owe a duty of care towards pupils which requires that reasonable measures to prevent harm are taken. Hence, in some circumstances, it may be appropriate to employ certain kinds of physical intervention to prevent a significant known and foreseeable risks of harm. Physical interventions ought only to be used when other strategies have been found to be unsuccessful, or when the risks of not employing an emergency intervention are outweighed by the risks of using one. Use of physical interventions needs to be consistent with the Human Rights Act (1998) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified 1991). These are based on the presumption that every person is entitled to:

Respect for his or her private life

- The right not to be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment
- The right to liberty and security
- The right not to be discriminated against in his / her enjoyment of those rights

Definitions of Physical Intervention

Physical Intervention refers to a range of physical actions used as techniques for responding to challenging behaviour and involving some degree of direct physical force to limit or restrict movement or mobility, which can include removal of an aid to mobility, normally used by that person. There are three main types of physical intervention:

- Direct physical contact between a member of a staff and a pupil. Examples include: holding a pupil by the arm to stop self-harm; using manual guidance to stop a pupil wandering into the road; or two people each holding a pupil and guiding them to a seat, if agitated.
- The use of barriers to limit freedom of movement, for example placing door catches beyond the reach of pupils where they are not being used as safety devices i.e. high handles in a classroom rather than to restrict access to an unsafe environment.
- Materials or equipment which restrict or prevent movement. Examples include using a splint to limit the movement of an arm or leg to stop a pupil self-harming or demonstrating injurious behaviours.

Physical intervention implies restriction of a person's movement maintained against resistance. It is, therefore, qualitatively different from forms of touch such as manual prompting, physical guidance or simply support. Over time, the term 'restraint' has acquired a number of negative connotations. It is also a term that is closely linked with a particular kind of approach to the management of aggressive and violent behaviour - 'Control and Restraint', or 'C and R'. For this reason, this document uses the more neutral term 'physical intervention', to indicate a continuum between touching, holding and restraint. Pupil centred de-escalation approaches will be used in conjunction with physical interventions at all times.

At the Mid Essex Anglican Academy Trust, we understand the following terms to mean:

Positive handling - describes the full range of Team-Teach strategies used to de-escalate, defuse and divert in order to prevent violence and reduce the risk of injury to staff, pupils, volunteers and visitors (physical and non-physical).

Restraint or Restrictive Physical Intervention - the positive application of force by staff, in order to overcome rigorous resistance; completely directing, deciding and controlling a pupil's free movement. The purpose of its application should be to safeguard the pupil, other people or prevent significant damage to property.

Seclusion - Forcing a pupil to spend time alone against their will (requires statutory powers other than in an emergency).

Time out - Restricting positive reinforcement as part of a planned approach (requires written agreed plan).

Withdrawal - Being removed from the situation, but observed and supported until they are ready to resume.

Escorts / Guides - a term used to describe moving a pupil from A to B. This may be to support a pupil with limited mobility who desires to move or to move a pupil against their will.

Chemical Restraint - The use of drugs and prescriptions to alter behaviour (prescribed by a medical professional, usually within a mental health team).

Mechanical Restraint - The planned use of belts, handcuffs, splints etc which restrict a pupil's movement for behavioural reasons.

Mechanical Support - The use of belts, wheelchairs, gaiters etc which restrict a pupil's movement in order to improve their physical position for medical reasons.

Physical Intervention - Any method whereby an adult enters a pupil's personal space for a physical purpose.

Manual / Physical Prompt - physical guidance to complete a targeted response for a limited period in order to

communicate, experience and learn new skills and responses.

Manual Handling - any transporting or supporting of a load (including the lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving thereof) by hand or by bodily force.

Bodily Contact - other non-restrictive physical contact: handshakes, hugs, high fives, to administer medicine, to maintain personal hygiene etc.

The need for Physical Restraint, areas of responsibility and individual accountability are covered in the Guidance section of this policy. Training and support will be offered to all staff involved in any aspect of Physical Restraint.

Risk Assessment and Risk Reduction

De-escalation

All staff and volunteers at the Mid Essex Anglican Academy Trust schools are aware of proactive approaches to risk reduction involving identifying and communicating early warning signs, situations, settings and other factors which may influence behaviour, then taking steps to divert behaviours which lead towards foreseeable risk. Pupils are encouraged to participate in the development of their own One Plans, where necessary and appropriate, by focusing on positive alternatives and choices. Parents and carers are also encouraged to contribute.

Much of the work which happens for and with students is focussed upon de-escalation and reparation, with physical intervention being only a small part of what is done to keep pupils and staff safe. At the Trust, we recognise that there are times when pupils do present a risk to themselves, or others and so physical intervention becomes necessary within the legal obligations and responsibilities of school staff and consistent with the rights and protection given to children under the law.

Our aim, in all our work, is to provide an environment in which all pupils feel happy and secure, and in which they can develop and learn – physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually. The justification for any kind of intervention, therefore, is that it is beneficial to the pupil(s) concerned.

When Physical Intervention may be necessary following a risk assessment

Physical interventions need to be pupil specific, integrated with other less intrusive approaches, and clearly part of an individual management plan approach to reduce risk, when needed. They must not become a standard way of coping, as a substitute for training in people related behaviour management and de-escalation skills. Health and Safety legislation applies to pupils who may present a risk to themselves or others. Wherever a risk can reasonably be foreseen there must be an assessment of the risk and a plan to reduce the risk. It is not always possible to eliminate risk, but staff will need to be able to show that they have attempted to reduce it. Pupils who present a risk should have a One Plan. Staff likely to come into contact with a pupil presenting a risk should be given guidance and training to enable them to assess and reduce the risk.

All staff must be aware of the distinction between physical contact or touch, used appropriately in everyday situations to support, encourage, guide or comfort a pupil, and the use of force to restrict movement or to disengage from pupils whose behaviour presents a clear risk of injury. It is acknowledged that with some disengagement techniques pupils may encounter some minimal discomfort when appropriate release techniques are used. However, this is very brief, transient and poses less of a risk than the behaviour they are used in response to, such as biting.

Any response to extreme behaviour should be reasonable and proportionate. People should not react in anger. If they feel they are becoming angry they should consider withdrawing to allow someone else to deal with the situation. It is always unlawful to use force as a punishment. When physical intervention is considered, staff should think about the answers to the following questions:

- Is this in the best interests of the young person?
- Is a less intrusive intervention possible?
- Do we have to act now?
- Am I the best person to be doing this?
- Is this absolutely necessary?

Where possible staff should always attempt to use other strategies in preference to physical interventions.

Responsibility

The Trust Board delegates managerial control for supervision and welfare of pupils to the Heads through the Governors of each school. The Heads will ensure that all matters relating to the care, welfare and physical restraint of pupils are dealt with by ensuring the policy is correctly applied. All staff have a duty of care in the protection of staff and pupils. The Heads will maintain an up-to-date list of those members of staff who have been trained to use reasonable force to affect a safe environment for all members of the community at each school. The Heads will:

- Ensure that all members of staff receive regular training and guidance;
- Ensure that all new staff receive guidance on the use of restraint as part of their induction programme if applicable to their roles;
- Provide guidance for staff dealing with challenging behaviour;
- Oversee reporting and recording systems;
- Monitor and review incidents; and
- Ensure that arrangements are in place for reviewing the policy in relation to their schools annually.

The Heads will review the policy annually in relation to their schools and will report any actions / amendments to the CEO who will refer changes to the policy to the Trust Board.

Principles of Physical Intervention

As endorsed in each school's Behaviour Policy, staff utilise consistent positive strategies to encourage acceptable behaviour and good order. Wherever possible, physical intervention should be a last resort - it should be reasonable. If used, any intervention should be necessary and proportionate and always in the best interests of the child. Every effort will be made to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to pupils or staff, property, buildings or the environment. Where unacceptable behaviour threatens good order and discipline and provokes intervention, some or all the following approaches should be taken according to the circumstances of the incident and in association with the Education and Inspections Act 2006 Section 93.

The school acknowledges that some children behave in ways that make it necessary to consider the use of restrictive physical intervention as part of a One Plan. This generally occurs when there is a risk of the pupil injuring themselves or others or causing significant damage to property. All identified behaviours necessitating use of physical intervention will be formally risk assessed. The resulting risk management strategy will be compatible with a positive behaviour management approach. A One Plan will be developed following the principles of the school's Behaviour policy and in consultation with the pupil's family. Once agreed and signed by the family and school, support plans are distributed throughout the school for appropriate staff to read. These are kept in the pupil's class. This plan will be operated consistently by all applicable members of staff at the school. Planned use of physical intervention will be in keeping with the pupil's Education and Health Care Plan if they have one. It will also be properly documented within school records.

Use of restrictive physical interventions in unforeseen and emergency situations

The school acknowledges that, on occasion, staff may find themselves in unforeseen or emergency situations when they have no option but to use reasonable force to manage a crisis. It is recommended that:

- before using force - staff attempt to use diversion to manage or defuse the situation
- when using force - staff must use techniques and methods with which they are familiar, confident and are permitted by the school
- in exceptional circumstances (where permitted techniques are ineffective or staff are unfamiliar with the action they should take) – staff shall manage the situation as best they can to comply with Section 550A of the Education Act 1996

Staff must always report and record use of physical force that occurs in both foreseen and unforeseen or emergency

situations on CPOMS, categorized as 'Restrictive Physical Intervention' and noted if there is or is not a One Plan identifying Restrictive Physical Intervention.

Emergency use of physical interventions may be required when pupils behave in unforeseen ways. Research evidence shows that injuries to staff and to pupils are more likely to occur when physical interventions are used in an emergency.

Even in an emergency, the force used must be **reasonable**. That is, it should be **proportionate** to the risk posed by the situation. The staff member or members concerned should be confident that the potential adverse outcomes associated with the intervention (for example, injury or distress) will be less severe than the adverse consequences which would have occurred without the use of a physical intervention.

Complaints Policy

Any pupil who is recognised as presenting challenging behaviour, and may be in need of physical intervention, will have One Plan which will have been co-created and shared with families. All interventions will be routinely recorded.

In any circumstance where a One Plan is not in place (and where RPI has taken place) then families will be contacted by the class teacher or a member of the School Leadership Team.

Reference should be made to the school's Complaint Policy.

Arrangements for Informing Families

Families will be informed of the school's policy regarding physical intervention in the following ways:

- A section about the school's legal obligations to maintain a safe environment and the possible use of physical intervention (as a very last resort) with pupils, will be included on the schools' and Trust's websites.
- Families will be informed after a non-routine incident where physical intervention is used with their child.

Responding to complaints

If a family member or pupil is concerned about any aspect of the management of an incident requiring physical intervention, he/she should inform the Heads of their concern.

If the concern relates to action by a Head, the family member should contact the Chair of the Local Board of Governors and follow the normal school complaints procedure.

Sharing details of the incident and its record should enable the resolution of most complaints but if a parent remains concerned, they should contact an external agency (Police or Social Care) to provide an independent investigation of the circumstances. This will determine the necessity for further action.

Appendix 1: Guidance on the use of Physical Intervention at the Mid Essex Anglican Academy Trust

Trust Expectations

The use of restrictive physical interventions must always be considered within the wider context of other measures. These include establishing and maintaining good relationships with children and using diversion, de-escalation and negotiation to respond to difficult situations. Use of physical force that is unwarranted, excessive or punitive is not acceptable. Failure to comply with this principle, when considering or using physical force, will be dealt with under school disciplinary procedures. The Trust considers the use of restrictive physical interventions as appropriate in the last resort to prevent a child injuring themselves or others or causing serious damage to property.

The Principle of Last Resort

Staff/employees should only use physical restraint when there is no other realistic alternative. This does not mean that we always expect people to methodically work their way through a series of failing strategies before attempting an intervention in which they have some confidence. Nor does it mean always waiting until the danger is acute and imminent, by which time the prospect of safely managing it may be significantly reduced. It does mean that staff should conduct a risk assessment and choose the safest alternative available. This includes thinking creatively about any alternatives to physical intervention which may be effective. National guidance is clear on this point. "If necessary, staff have the authority to take immediate action to prevent harm occurring even if the harm is expected to happen sometime in the predicted future." Para 10 Page 4 Department of Health – 1997 – "The Control of Children in the Public Care: Interpretation of the Children Act 1989" - London: HMSO Reasonable interventions under these circumstances would be the choice of the least invasive but effective strategy from those outlined in the Team-Teach program. The use of methods of restraint not approved in the Team-Teach program, particularly if these involve excessive force or cause injury to the pupil, is forbidden and may lead to disciplinary action against the member of staff responsible.

Positive Behaviour Management

All staff must adopt a positive approach to improving behaviour in order to reward effort and application, and to build self-esteem. The school will work in partnership with those who know the child to help:

- find out why this child behaves as he or she does
- understand the factors that influence this child's behaviour
- identify early warning signs that indicate foreseeable behaviours are developing

This approach will help to ensure that early and preventative intervention is the norm. It should reduce the incidence of extreme behaviours and make sure that the use of physical force is rare. School staff must refer to the school's Behaviour policy when developing and implementing One Plans. All One Plans should be formally agreed and ratified before implementing them in school. Plans should be formally recorded in accordance with procedures and set out the action taken to:

- meet the pupil's needs
- encourage the pupil to make positive choices and develop self-control

- support the pupil in difficult situations
- safely manage crises if and when they occur

Although written and agreed by the class teacher and the heads, all those who know the child well, including their family, will contribute to devising the plan and families will be required to ratify the measures outlined.

Practice Regarding Specific Incidents

Staff intervening with pupils will seek assistance from other members of staff as early as possible, since single-handed intervention increases the risks of injury to both parties and does not provide a witness.

All staff who become aware that another member of staff is intervening physically with a pupil will have responsibility to provide a presence and to offer support and assistance should this be required.

Before intervening in a non-emergency, consideration will be given to whether or not other staff are available to assist.

Where possible, staff who have not been involved in the initial confrontation leading up to an incident may be in a better position to intervene or restrain the pupil if this proves necessary. Staff should support colleagues by offering to take over the role of restraint to minimise stress.

A pupil's behaviour may be adversely affected by the presence of an audience. Wherever possible, the audience will be removed, or if this is not possible, the pupil will be removed from the audience. The pupil and member(s) of staff will withdraw to a quiet, but not completely private, place (eg two members of staff should be present or a door left open so that others are aware of the situation).

Staff will be aware of the need to tell the pupil being restrained, in a calm and gentle manner, that the reason for the intervention is to keep the pupil and others safe. Staff will explain that as soon as the pupil calms down, he/she will be released.

All staff should be supported by a back-up system to enable staff to call for help in emergencies such as the use of mobile phones or walkie talkies.

Physical Intervention/Restraint Approaches which can be regarded as reasonable in appropriate circumstances

The following approaches are regarded as reasonable in appropriate circumstances:

- standing between pupils;
- blocking a pupil's path;
- leading a pupil by the hand or arm;
- ushering a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back; and
- in more extreme circumstances, using appropriate restrictive holds, which will require specific expertise or training.

Recording an Incident

All incidents of physical intervention will be recorded using CPOMS and by clicking on the Behaviour Incident tab, and where an injury has occurred, the Health and Safety Tab. The incident will be recorded as soon as possible and at most within a twenty-four-hour period. The record will detail the Antecedent (A), the Behaviour (B) and the Consequence (C). Details of whether an IMP is in place or not will also be recorded alongside further action to be taken which may include a review of the One Plan or a writing of one. The Antecedent prompts for CPOMS can be found in Appendix 1.

Monitoring the use of Restrictive Physical Interventions

The use of physical intervention in our school will be monitored in order to help our staff learn from experience, promote the well-being of pupils in our care and provide a basis for appropriate support and school organisation. Monitoring will help us to determine what specialist help is needed for pupils. Information on trends and emerging problems will be shared within our school using local procedures. Monitoring information will be reported on a regular basis to school governors by the Heads. Physical Intervention Records will be available for monitoring by the Trust and Ofsted from CPOMS.

Post Incident Support

We will ensure that the pupil and the member of staff have immediate access to first aid for any signs of injury. This must be recorded.

We will give the pupil time to become calm while staff continue to supervise him/her. We will take all necessary steps to re-establish the relationship between the pupil and the member(s) of staff involved in the incident at an appropriate time for the individual pupil.

We will give the pupil opportunities to reflect on the incident; to share their views and consider alternative actions they could have taken, as appropriate to their cognitive and emotional level.

All members of staff involved will be allowed a period to debrief and recover from the incident wherever necessary. This may involve access to external support. A senior member of our staff (or his/her nominee) will provide support to the member of staff involved where requested.

The class teacher will be informed at the earliest possible opportunity of any incidents where physical intervention or restraint has been used. The individual member of staff involved will initiate the recording process supported by the class teacher (see Recording an Incident above) and we will review each incident to ensure that any necessary lessons are learned.

We will inform families of any unplanned or emergency incidences involving physical intervention as soon as possible after the incident and whenever practicable on the day of the incident before the child arrives home where it is unexpected.

Training Needs of Staff

All teaching and support staff, as well as midday carers, where this is deemed necessary, will be trained in the Team-Teach program. This will happen at the earliest date available after employment. We will ensure that all staff working with pupils who may require physical intervention will receive this training and we will keep it updated as prescribed by the trainers during their employment at Trust.

In specific cases, where an individual student may require more specialist support in managing their behaviour, further training will be sought through accredited Team-Teach trainers.

The Trust will ensure a member of the Executive Leadership Team is a trained TeamTeach trainer.

Appendix 2: Antecedent Descriptors for CPOMS

Antecedents - What happened immediately before the behaviour occurred?
GROUP 1- Access to motivators (availability of objects / activities a student really likes
Physically prevents from accessing a motivator (cannot get what he / she wants because staff blocked access of items as in a locked cupboard / other room
Verbally prevented from accessing a motivator (told that he / she cannot have item at the moment)
Another student is accessing the motivator (other student has what he / she wants)
Motivator broken / not working
GROUP 2 - Removal / attempted removal of motivator
Staff removed or attempted to remove a motivator
Another student removed or attempted to remove motivator
GROUP 3 - Staff Instructions
Requested by staff to co-operate, begin or repeat a task
Requested by staff to continue / complete an activity
Requested by staff to finish motivating activity
GROUP 4 - Sensory
A sudden, sustained, repetitive or loud noise
A sudden, sustained, repetitive or sporadic movement (by student or others)
A change in lighting (which may be sudden)
Hands become messy
Touched unexpectedly / jostled by another student or staff member
Another student was too close
A staff member was too close
GROUP 5 - Social Interaction
Another student made a comment to them
A member of staff made a (social) comment to them
Copying the behaviour of another student
Disturbance in the class / setting / bus
A particular student was in sight
A favoured member of staff / student was not available
GROUP 6 - Attention
Seeking attention for staff
Another student had turned their attention away
Favoured staff working with another student
GROUP 7 - Underlying Factors (Which may have contributed to the situation)
Unwell / Pain
Hunger / Thirst
Too hot / cold
Uncomfortable
Medication issues
Changes at home
Changes at school
Known dislike of environment (place or event)
Not occupied / bored
Excitement
Menstrual Cycle
Sexual arousal / sexual feelings
Anxious / upset with reason unknown
GROUP 8 - No Identified Antecedent (NIA)