Lake Haven School

Restrictive Intervention and Positive Handling Policy 2026/27

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Proprietors	Alexandra Marshall and Lindsay Taylor
Headteacher	Imogen Warwick
DSL	Sarah Hill
Nominated person responsible for this policy	Lindsay Taylor
Approved by	Alexandra Marshall
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Rationale

Children learn who they are and how the world is by forming relationships with people and things around them. The quality of a child's relationship with significant adults is vital to their healthy development and emotional health and well-being.

Most of our children at Lake Haven have been subject to school based trauma or anxiety and their relationship with an educational setting may not be very positive. It is with this in mind that staff seek to respond to children's developmental needs by using appropriate safe touch.

Our policy takes into account the extensive neurological research and studies relating to attachment theory and child development that identify safe touch as a positive contribution to brain development, mental health and the development of social skills.

Lake Haven is committed to ensuring that all staff and adults with responsibility for pupil safety and welfare will deal professionally with all incidents involving any aggressive or reckless behaviour, and use physical intervention only as a last resort. We do not believe that the children at Lake Haven will require this intervention as we endeavour to meet needs. However, if used at all, it will be in the context of a respectful, supportive relationship with the pupil, and be reasonable and proportional to the circumstances of the incident. We will always aim to ensure minimal risk of injury to pupils and staff.

It is recognised in both statute[1] and Common Law that there is a need to intervene when there is an obvious risk of safety to pupils, staff and property.

[1] Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006

This policy is based on The Department for Education guidance Use of Reasonable Force Advice for Head Teachers, staff and Governing Bodies February 2025.

Objectives

The key objectives of this policy are to:

- Maintain the safety of pupils, staff and visitors
- Prevent serious damage to property
- Prevent serious breaches of school discipline

Different types of touch

There are five different types of touch and physical contact that may be used. These are:

1. *Casual / informal / incidental touch*

Staff use touch with pupils as part of a normal relationship, for example, comforting a child, giving assurance or congratulating. This might include putting an arm out to bar an exit from a room, taking a child by the hand, patting on the back or putting an arm around the shoulders. The benefit of this action is often proactive and can prevent a situation from escalating.

2. *General reparative touch*

This is used by staff working with children who are having difficulties with their emotions. Healthy emotional development requires safe touch as a means of soothing and containing distress for a frightened, angry or sad child. Touch used to regulate a child's emotions triggers the release of the calming chemical oxytocin in the body. Reparative touch may include stroking a back, squeezing an arm, rocking gently, cuddling, tickling, sitting on an adult's lap or hand or foot massage.

3. *Contact play*

Contact play is used by staff adopting a role similar to a parent in a healthy child-parent relationship. This will only take place when the child has developed a trusting relationship with the adult and when they feel completely comfortable and at ease with this type of contact. Contact play may include an adult chasing and catching the child or an adult and child playing a game of building towers with their hands.

4. *Interactive play (rough and tumble play)*
This structured play follows clear rules and is operated under close supervision by staff. It will only ever take place when all participants are in agreement and completely understand the rules. This sort of play releases the following chemicals in the brain: opioids (to calm and soothe and give pleasure); dopamine (to focus, be alert and concentrate), and; brain derived neurotrophic factor (a brain fertiliser that encourages growth). Interactive play may include throwing cushions at each other or using soft foam bats to fence each other.

5. *Positive handling*
Details are given below.

Deciding if the use of restrictive physical intervention is appropriate

School staff have a legal power to use force and lawful use of the power will provide a defence to any related criminal prosecution or other legal action. However staff will view physical intervention of pupils as a last resort. If pupils are behaving disruptively or anti-socially, every effort will be made to manage behaviour positively to prevent the need for restrictive physical intervention.

In the following situations staff must judge whether or not physical intervention would be reasonable or appropriate:

- Where a pupil is self-harming
- Where there is a risk to the safety of staff, pupils, or visitors
- Where there is a risk of serious damage to property
- Where a pupil's behaviour is seriously prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline.
- Where a pupil is committing a criminal offence.

Restrictive physical interventions can be employed to achieve a number of different outcomes:

- to break away or disengage from dangerous or harmful physical contact initiated by a pupil
- to separate the person from a 'trigger', for example, removing one pupil who responds to another with physical aggression;
- to protect a pupil from a dangerous situation – for example, the hazards of a busy road.

The vast majority of physical intervention will be part of a planned response but there may be occasions when it is unplanned. A planned intervention is one in which staff employ, where necessary, pre-arranged strategies and methods which are based upon a risk assessment, Positive Handling Plans and recorded following the procedures as outlined in this policy. An unplanned response occurs in response to unforeseen events.

Any member of staff who undertakes a restrictive physical intervention should be clear as to why it is necessary and be able to show that it was in the pupil's best interest and that it was reasonable and proportionate. For those pupils assessed as being at risk of restrictive physical intervention, Positive Handling Plans will be developed. These plans outline what techniques should, at best, be used in association to the perceived threat, along with previously determined de-escalation strategies based on a sound knowledge of the identified pupil.

The judgement on whether to use physical intervention and what physical intervention should be used should always depend on the circumstances of each case. In the case of pupils with Special Educational Needs, information about the individual concerned is of paramount importance and school takes into account its legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

Staff need to make the clearest possible judgements about:

a. The seriousness of the incident, assessed by the effect of the injury, damage or disorder which is likely to result if force is not used. The greater the potential for injury, damage or serious disorder, the more likely it is that using force may be justified.
b. The chances of achieving the desired result by other means. The lower the probability of achieving the desired result by other means, the more likely it is that using force may be justified.
c. The relative risks associated with physical intervention compared with using other strategies. The smaller the risks associated with physical intervention compared with other strategies, the more likely it is that using force may be justified.

Staff should also be aware of guidance which states:

- Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- In a school, force is used for two main purposes – to control pupils or to restrain them.
- The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.

The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can be used.

- remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;
- prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit;
- prevent a pupil leaving the classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others;
- prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground; and
- restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

School does not use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

Using physical interventions

Before using restrictive physical intervention staff should, wherever practicable, tell the pupil to stop misbehaving and communicate in a calm and measured manner throughout the incident. The member of staff will, where practicable, implement the school Behaviour Policy by the implementation of a range of strategies and interventions before using a physical intervention.

Alternative types of physical intervention could include:

a. Passive physical contact resulting from standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path.
b. Active physical contact such as:
    i) Leading a pupil by the hand or arm;

ii) Ushering a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back;
iii) Guiding a pupil with caring C's placed just above the elbow
iv) In more extreme circumstances, using appropriate restrictive interventions, which require specific expertise and training.

Should a restrictive physical intervention be absolutely necessary then staff should make it clear to the pupil that physical contact or restraint will be for a minimal amount of time and will stop, as soon as it ceases to be necessary.

We have three members of staff that have been trained using TEAM TEACH. As Lake Haven is a calm setting, we wish never to have to utilise this training again. But, if we receive a child whose anxiety returns or they become dysregulated on a regular basis (more than twice), we will instruct members of our staff to undertake the course when the time has expired on their current certificate. The restrictive physical interventions that will be authorised by the school are those techniques in which members of staff have received appropriate training and development through 'Team Teach'.

The core principles of 'Team Teach' include:

- Minimum of two staff involved.
- Last resort minimum force and time.
- Techniques that do not rely on pain or locks and allow for verbal communication.
- Staff safety and protection addressed.
- Planned responses and techniques are written out and included in positive handling plans for individual pupils.

Guidance states "School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the pupil."

School recognises that Team-Teach techniques seek to avoid injury to the pupil but it is possible bruising or scratching may occur accidently, and these are not to be seen as a failure of professional technique, but a regrettable and infrequent side effect of ensuring that the pupil remains safe.

Alternatives to physical intervention

A member of staff who chooses not to make a physical intervention can still take effective action to reduce risk. They can:

- Show care and concern by acknowledging unacceptable behaviour and requesting alternatives using negotiation and reason.
- Give clear directions to the pupils to stop.
- Remind them about rules and likely outcomes.
- Remove an audience or take vulnerable pupils to a safer place.
- Make the environment safer by moving furniture and removing objects which could be used as weapons.
- Use 'positive touch' to guide or escort pupils to somewhere less pressurised.
- Ensure that colleagues know what is happening and get help.

Staff will understand the importance of listening to and respecting children to create an environment that is calm and supportive especially when dealing with pupils who may have emotional and behavioural needs which may increase their aggression. All staff will understand the importance of responding to the feelings of the pupil which lie beneath the behaviour as well as to the behaviour itself.

Reducing the likelihood of situations arising where physical intervention may be required

All physical interventions at the school are conducted within a framework of positive behaviour management. The Behaviour Policy rewards effort and

application, and encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour. It also outlines the steps the school undertakes to ensure a calm, orderly and supportive school climate which minimises the risk and threat of violence of any kind, thereby reducing the need for physical intervention.

A structured approach to staff development is adopted through the 'Team Teach' programme and other Professional Development training opportunities, which allows staff to develop the skills of positive behaviour management and de-escalating incidents.

Staff should recognise the need to effectively manage individual incidents. It is important to communicate calmly with the pupil, using non-threatening verbal communication and body language which is likely to reduce the risk of escalation. Staff should offer positive choices to ensure that the pupil can see a way out of the situation. Strategies might include, for example, going with the staff member to a quiet room, away from bystanders or other pupils, so that the staff member can listen to concerns; or being joined by a particular member of staff well known to the pupil.

Wherever practicable a pupil should be warned that physical intervention may have to be used before applying it.

Authorisation of staff to use physical intervention and staff development

As stated in The Department for Education guidance Use of Reasonable Force Advice for Head Teachers, staff and Governing Bodies 2025, "All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force".

School believes in ensuring that some staff are trained in specific physical interventions and de-escalation strategies through the 'Team Teach'

approach. If required, and staff have received their full training, refresher training will take place 2-3 years following initial training.

The names of staff that have been trained to use physical intervention techniques along with the dates they received their training are kept centrally by the Head teacher.

Positive Handling Plans

Individual pupils assessed at being at greatest risk of requiring restrictive physical intervention will be identified through the member of staff with responsibility for Positive Behaviour. These pupils will be placed on Positive Handling Plans developed in consultation with the school, Parents/ Carers, and the pupil.

Positive Handling Plans set out the situations that may provoke difficult behaviour, preventative strategies and the de-escalation strategies that are most effective. Specific strategies and techniques that have been agreed by staff when physical intervention is required are also included.

Positive Handling Plans:

- Should inform risks assessments where necessary and alert people to risks.
- Should warn against strategies which have been ineffective in the past.
- Should include preferred strategies and suggest ideas for the future.
- Should bring together contributions from key partners working in partnership and signed by all concerned.
- Should be reviewed regularly and especially following restraint incidents.

Recording and reporting incidents

All incidents that result in non-routine interventions will be recorded in detail. Contemporaneous notes (i.e., written within 24 hours of the incident's occurrence) will be made by the staff member involved in the original incident. The school keeps a record of all physical interventions in 'The Bound and Numbered' incident book. It is located in the filing cabinet in the Staffroom. All records will be kept for 75 years from the date of birth of the pupil. All records will also be added to our MIS for reference. They should be completed after everyone has recovered, state briefly exactly what happened, be signed and dated, be monitored and evaluated, inform behavioural risk assessments and positive handling plans.

The purpose of recording is to ensure that policy guidelines are followed, to inform parents/ carers, to inform future planning as part of the school improvement process, to prevent misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the incident and to provide a record for any future enquiry.

Accounts of the incident should be taken from the member of staff who undertook the physical intervention, the pupils involved and any third party witnesses.

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

- The policy can be accessed by parents through the school website. It will be signposted in the school prospectus and in welcome packs for new starters.
- staff who work with particular children who have learning or physical disabilities (and who have Individual Education Plans, Individual Behaviour Plans and/or Pastoral Support Plans) may need to use specific techniques routinely to manage challenging behaviour. Such arrangements will be discussed with parents/carers in advance on an

individual basis. All interventions will be routinely recorded as specified in 'The Bound and Numbered Book'.

- all parents will be informed after a non-routine incident where physical intervention is used with a child as soon as possible after any recordable incident.
- Parents/carers will be informed of when and where the incident took place, which members of staff were directly involved (anonymised where necessary), why they decided physical intervention had to be used, what physical intervention was used, whether there were any injuries and what follow up action was being taken in relation to their child.
- Parents/carers will also be given a copy of the 'Policy for the Restrictive intervention and Positive Handling of pupils.'

The Headteacher will be informed at the earliest possible opportunity that a physical intervention has taken place. The Headteacher will initiate the recording process and review each incident.

Proprietors will be informed of the number of physical interventions on an annual basis. (2024-2025 0 incidents)

Post-incident support

The school recognises the need to ensure that staff and pupils have appropriate emotional support.

The pupil and the member of staff will be checked for any sign of injury after an incident. Immediate action will be taken to provide first aid for any injuries requiring attention.

The pupil will be given time to become calm whilst staff continue to supervise. When it is deemed that the pupil is composed, a senior member

of staff will discuss the incident with the pupil and ascertain the reason for its occurrence. All necessary steps will be taken to re-establish a positive relationship between the pupil and the member of staff involved in the incident.

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

Parents/carers will be engaged in discussing the incident and for setting out subsequent actions and support.

Complaint procedure

If a parent/carer or Pupil/student is concerned about any aspect of the management of an incident requiring physical intervention, the Headteacher should be informed of their concern. The headteacher will respond to the complaint in accordance with school policy and procedure. If concern relates to action by the Headteacher, the parent/carer should contact the Proprietor.