



**Comberton
Primary School**

*A caring community
for all to shine*

Comberton Primary School

Positive Handling Policy

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Signed by:

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Date: Sep 2026

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Policy Statement

This policy is based on DoH/DfES RPI Guidance.

At Comberton Primary School we work to ensure each individual pupil is able to reach his or her potential. Every child is entitled to learn and every teacher is free to teach in an environment that is safe, secure and free from distraction. The guiding principles to achieve this are established in our Behaviour and Relationships Policy. Staff of Comberton Primary School are committed to providing the highest standards in protecting and safeguarding the welfare of children and young people entrusted to our care. We recognise there is a need in line with the DoH/DfES RPI (Restricting Physical Intervention) Guidance, to intervene when there is an obvious risk of safety to pupils, staff and property. For the most part this is achieved through the fostering of good relationships, and the normal application of positive behaviour management to support and intervene. However, in exceptional or extreme circumstances this may involve the use of reasonable force. It should be emphasised that if used at all, restraint (referred to in this document as **Positive Physical Interventions (PPI)**) should be seen in the context of a further positive action of care and concern. In line with DoH/DfES RPI Guidance, it is used as a '**last resort**' option and in the most extreme cases, other strategies will always have been attempted first. As best practice regarding PPI, this policy should be considered alongside other relevant school policies, especially those involving behaviour, health and safety and child protection.

This policy is written in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, the DfE guidance 'Restrictive interventions including use of reasonable force in schools' (latest edition), and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026. The policy will be reviewed and updated promptly to reflect any changes in statutory guidance or legislation.

What is The Real Use of Reasonable Force to Control Pupils?

Teachers and other persons authorised by the Head Teacher to have charge of pupils, may use reasonable force to prevent pupils:

- Causing injury to themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence (including behaving in a way that would be an offence if the pupil were not under the age of criminal responsibility
- Causing disruption by engaging in behaviour, which is seriously prejudicial to good order and discipline.

'Reasonable force' has no precise legal definition, but for clarity in this policy it includes: guided escorting, brief holding to prevent harm, and restrictive holds applied only by staff trained and authorised to use them. 'Restrictive interventions' are actions that restrict a pupil's movement, liberty or freedom to act independently and are only used where necessary.

- Staff must take into account the circumstances of the incident, age, sex and development of the pupil.
- The degree of force must be proportional to the seriousness of the situation, behaviour or consequences it is intended to prevent, and always be the minimum force needed.
- Force could not be justified for a trivial misdemeanor or a situation that could be resolved without it.
- Everyone has the right to self-defence provided they do not use a disproportionate degree of force.
- Corporal punishment is illegal.

Objectives of this Policy

To provide all staff, governors, parents and pupils with an understanding of care and control and the use of force.

To emphasise that the use of PPI is:

- Part of a positive care and control approach to discipline and welfare.
- **Last resort** or a **necessary** expedient option to be used in extreme circumstance.

To ensure that all members of staff or authorised persons who may have to positively handle pupils clearly understand the options and strategies open to them.

Strategies for avoiding incidents:

All staff, through regular Team-Teach training, possess the skills to adopt effective strategies to defuse potential instances of conflict or aggression. Addressing situations in their infancy can be invaluable in managing potentially extreme behaviours. In line with the DoH.DfES RPI Guidance, secondary preventative strategies are applied when 'primary prevention has not been effective'. These measures include:

- *Communication/verbal advice and support.* Early intervention needs to be assertive but non-confrontational. If students are spoken to in the mode of 'critical parent', a negative response is likely. Awareness of tone of voice, body posture and eye contact is important as communication needs to be non-threatening, calm and assured. Staff should attend to a student when they are showing signs of agitation/distress/anger and support/advise them according to the situation
- *Affection* - for the angry student whose behaviour is rooted in their insecurity, it is important that they feel accepted and respected as individuals. Reject the behaviour not the person by showing that you care despite the difficulties
- *distraction/redirection* – is the action of diverting the student's attention from a potentially inflammatory situation to something in which he has an interest
- *Reassurance* – is about supporting, comforting and encouraging a student in a situation in which they might be feeling helpless, vulnerable, possibly defenseless and exposed to a risky environment
- *Planned ignoring* – at times, highly provocative and attention seeking behaviour can be ignored to good effect. The skill is knowing when to ignore and when to intervene. Good practice is based upon *Risk Assessment*
- *Time out* – this is to allow a student 'space' on their own; to move to a different environment with time to calm down and consider their actions. The student is more likely to calm down without the attention of an audience
- *Withdrawal* – which involves removing the student from the situation which causes anxiety or distress to a location where they can be continuously observed and supported until they are ready to resume their usual activities. This could be in a Quiet Room; with a member of staff
- *Humour* – possibly the most effective and most commonly used strategy. Although self-explanatory, staff should make sure the humour is used in the right context for the particular student
- *Calm talking stance* – staff should endeavour to maintain a calm, confident and objective approach in conflict situations

- *Negotiation/being objective* – the ability to listen and talk to students and come to an agreement by setting limits and offering options. This will allow a ‘back door exit’ from the situation that will help keep their pride and dignity in tact as well as that of the staff member(s) involved
- *Transfer adult* – if there is an incident where the adult present is seen to be aggravating the situation, it should be assessed as to whether moving the adult out of sight might defuse the situation. This should be done, if possible, leaving enough staff to control the situation
- *Success reminder* – remind the student of a previous occasion when they successfully managed a volatile situation of a similar nature. If they are feeling particularly low, look to remind them of something they did in the past that made them happy/proud/feel good
- *support through daily routine* – a bored student is more likely to present with negative behaviours and therefore a strong daily routine of active engagement in the classroom and in social times, reduces their need to act out inappropriate behaviours
- *Physical intervention* – is an approved management strategy but should be used as a last resort when all of the above strategies have been exhausted.

Who Can Use Reasonable Force?

We recognise that most of the time PPI will be used infrequently, that is, as a **last resort** to maintaining a safe environment.

All teaching staff are authorised by role to use reasonable force where necessary. Non-teaching staff who may need to use PPI must be authorised in writing by the Headteacher (or an appointed deputy). The Headteacher will maintain a current register of authorised staff and ensure cover arrangements. Authorised staff will receive initial and regular refresher training, and records of training will be kept centrally.

Circumstances when Reasonable Force Might Be Appropriate?

We recognise that some children may not be able to control their reaction to events as well as others and at times may place themselves or others at risk through their uncontrolled behaviour. As indicated, reasonable force might be appropriate when:

Action is necessary in self-defence or because of imminent risk of injury.

Examples:

- Pupil attacks a member of staff, another pupil, attempts self-injury, pupils are fighting.
- Pupil running in classroom or corridor in a way that is likely to cause injury to self or others.

There is a serious and developing risk of damage to property, including the pupil’s own property.

Examples:

- Pupil is causing or about to cause deliberate damage or vandalism.
- Pupil is causing or at risk of causing injury or damage by accident, rough play, misuse of dangerous materials or objects.

Where pupil’s behaviour is seriously prejudicial to good order and discipline.

Examples:

- Pupil persistently refuses to follow an instruction to leave the classroom.
- Pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson.

Wherever possible early support from colleagues will be sought. Single handed intervention increases the risk of injury to both parties and does not provide the person intervening with the support of a colleague acting as a critical friend.

Strategies other than force will be considered.

Examples:

- Providing the disruptive pupil with a choice of locations to exit to
- Giving clear directions
- Allowing 'take-up' time thus allowing a 'face-saving' opportunity
- Removing the audience, ie requesting that other pupils leave the room
- Implementing Team Teach help protocols/script so that another member of staff takes over the strategic lead of the incident, if he/she feels it is appropriate to do so.

Procedures and Practical Considerations during Specific Incidents within the setting

Wherever practicable, staff are expected to:

- Use a calm and measured approach
- Give clear direction to the pupil
- Seek assistance from other colleagues at as early a stage as possible
- Staff who become aware that another member of staff is intervening physically with a pupil have a responsibility to provide a presence, and to offer support and assistance should this be required
- Try to defuse the situation orally and prevent escalation
- Try to remove the pupil from the peer audience
- Attempt to communicate with the pupil throughout the incident
- In as calm a manner as possible, explain that the reason for intervention is to keep the pupil and others safe
- Make it clear that PPI will stop as soon as the pupil calms and the risk assessment indicates it is no longer necessary
- If it is not possible to control the extreme pupil without risk of injury to yourself or others, remove the other pupils who may be at risk and summon assistance.

Application of Force during Specific Incidents

Only approved techniques taught through the school's agreed training provider should be used.

Restrictive holds that are likely to cause pain, restrict breathing, or involve prone or supine holds are prohibited unless such actions are explicitly authorised in a pupil's individual risk reduction plan and only then as a last resort, with medical and parental agreement and multidisciplinary oversight. Staff must never use seclusion, mechanical restraint, chemical restraint or techniques known to cause pain.

Methods that staff **may use** in appropriate circumstances where a risk assessment judgement supports this:

- *Shepherding* a pupil away by a light touch on the elbow or near the shoulder
- *"Guiding"* – remembering this is the positive application of force to control a pupil and would be used in rare circumstances, eg if the pupil is in extreme danger and no other alternative is available, or where reasonable force is used to assist a pupil's movement.

- **Holding** – for security and to reduce anxiety where there is potential risk, even if the pupil is not yet out of control. The purpose is to defuse or prevent escalation.

When intervening, staff should take care that their actions should in no way be capable of being interpreted as aggressive. All holds are devised to minimise the risk of injury. They should not cause pain.

- Where pupils are presenting with more challenging behaviour which may require more restrictive holds, it is important that these techniques have been delivered by appropriately qualified Team Teach instructors in line with Team Teach protocols.

Staff **may not** carry out action that might reasonably be expected to injure by:

- Holding a pupil around the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict the ability to breathe.
- Slapping, punching or kicking a pupil.
- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint.
- Tripping a pupil.
- Holding or pulling the pupil by the hair.

Other considerations for **non-urgent situations** where the risk to the people or property is not imminent:

- Consider carefully whether positive handling is the right course of action
- Try to deal with the situation through other strategies before using force.
- Try to defuse and calm the situation to establish good order; the use of positive handling could lead to an escalation of the problem.
- Take into account the age, understanding, personal characteristics of the pupil.
- The use of positive handling to enforce compliance is likely to be increasingly inappropriate with older pupils.
- Never use force as a substitute for good behaviour management.
- In non urgent situations force should only be used when all other methods have failed.

Reporting and Recording Incidents

All incidents involving PPI must be recorded within 24 hours in the bound incidents book and in the electronic safeguarding record (CPOMS). Records will include: names, date/time, location, written description of events, de-escalation attempts, injuries to any party, witnesses, names of staff involved, duration of hold, parent contact and outcome.

The member of staff concerned will report the matter orally to a senior member of staff (SLT) as soon as possible. The incident will be recorded in the Bound Book by staff at the earliest opportunity.

A staff member will inform parents/carers about the incident by the end of the school day. However, if parents/carers cannot be reached a letter will be sent to inform them of the incident and offer them the opportunity to discuss the matter.

A log will be kept of any occasion when PPI is used.

When PPI has been used and pupils have been held using techniques, the Incident report will be signed by a member of SLT.

The Bound Book will be reviewed by SLT or a person with responsibility to consider control measures and possible training or further training needs etc.

The Bound Book will be monitored additionally by an appropriate member of the Governing Body once every term.

A copy of the Risk Reduction Plan will be placed in the pupil's file.

Serious incidents must be notified to the relevant local authority safeguarding team and to the School's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where required by guidance. Records will be retained in accordance with data protection and retention schedules and shared only on a need-to-know basis.

Should an injury occur as a result of an incident at school, immediate steps will be taken to secure appropriate medical attention. This will be reported and recorded in accordance with our First Aid and the Administration of Medicines policy.

Restraint is **“the positive application of force with the intention of overpowering the client” (DOH 4/93 Section 5.2).**

Debriefing Following Serious Incident

Pupils and members of staff will be checked for any sign of injury and first aid will be administered if required.

The pupil will be given time to become calm while staff continue to supervise/observe him/her. When the pupil regains complete composure, a senior member of staff and staff involved in the PPI will discuss the incident with the pupil and try to ascertain the reason for it.

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 will provide support to the member of staff involved.

Other Procedures Concerning Incidents

If necessary and appropriate the Chair of Governing body, will be informed/consulted.

Help, support and reassurance will be given where appropriate to any persons involved.

Where possible an attempt will be made to help the pupil modify their behaviour.

Where possible, the pupil should apologise, this should be meaningful or appropriate. If this cannot be undertaken then other consequences/sanctions reparations and monitoring should take place.

Planning for Incidents and Meeting Training Needs

For any pupil for whom PPI is likely, the school will create a PHP co-produced with parents, pupil (where appropriate), and relevant professionals (health, SEN team). The PHP will include: clear triggers, preferred de-escalation strategies, prohibited actions, authorised holds (if any), medical considerations, staff

authorised to implement, training requirements, and a schedule for review (minimum termly or after a significant incident). PHPs must be stored on the pupil's safeguarding file and communicated to all staff who work with the pupil

Primary prevention is achieved through effective Team-Teach training to develop 'staff expertise in working with pupils who present challenging behaviours (DoH/DfES RPI Guidance' (Prevention).

Staff involved will, through risk assessment, have identified their training needs in this area. In cases where it is known that a pupil will require PPI appropriate training will be provided (accessed through *The Positive Behaviour Team Ltd*).

Arrangements for Informing Parents

For some children there may be the need to use specific techniques to routinely manage their challenging behaviour. This will be recorded in their PEP, Positive Handling Plan or PSP. Such arrangements will be fully discussed with parents/carers, on an individual basis, in advance of their implementation. All intervention will be routinely recorded and monitored.

All parents will be informed after an incident where positive handling is used with a pupil.

Physical Contact with Pupils in other Circumstances

Staff must be sensitive to matters relating to culture and gender issues and any known individual characteristics or special circumstances relating to pupils.

Some physical contact may be necessary eg during PE lessons, sports coaching or CDT, or if a member of staff has to administer first aid or medication.

Young children and children with SEN may need staff to provide physical prompts to help.

Physical contact must always be age appropriate and done openly.

Complaints

This policy is in accordance with the DoH/DfES RPI Guidance and as such, those acting in accordance with it, providing they act in good faith, working within the authority guidelines, will be positively supported in their actions.

Involving parents when an incident occurs, following our policy about physical contact (which has been developed in line with the Positive Behaviour Team) and regular staff training ensure we are working within best possible guidelines.

All complaints will be recorded and followed up by the Head Teacher or their representative in the first instance. Where appropriate, the Authority will be notified/kept informed.

A complaint or dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation under disciplinary procedures or under Child Protection procedures.

Review

This policy will be regularly monitored by the Head Teacher and Governing board in addition updated every 2 years.

The date for next review is September 2028.

Training of Team Teach & Behaviour strategies: Team Teach programme Is ICM accredited.

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