



Patrician Primary School

Guidelines for Using Physical Interventions and Restrictive Practices

Involving pupils

Ethos: This policy reflects the school's ethos and applies the principles outlined in our Code of Behaviour, which provide guidelines to staff on the use of day-to-day positive behavioural management strategies. These are designed to help all pupils to modify/manage their own behaviour in the long-term. Where these strategies are not working and it is foreseeable that a pupil might engage in high risk behaviours requiring a physical intervention or restrictive practice, this policy applies.

The Board of Management takes seriously its duty of care to pupils, employees and visitors noting that:

The paramount concerns are for the safety and welfare of the pupils in the school as well as for the safety and welfare of the adults who look after them - therefore we will aim to implement our duty of care to all affected by our work at all times.

The policy is based on guidance from the following:

- Education and Welfare Act 2000
- Best Practice Guidelines on the Use of Physical Restraints: Special Residential Board 2006
- Health and Safety at Work Act 2007 Safety, Health and Welfare At Work Act, 2005 (as well as other statutes and standards)
- Physical Contact; Care, Comfort and Restraint, by Bernard Allen, 2011
- Children First Guidelines 2015
- Guidelines for Schools on Supporting Students with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties - An information guide for Primary Schools: DES 2013.
- Circular 81/2024 and accompanying DES guidelines "Understanding behaviours of concern and responding to crisis situations"

Other Relevant Policies

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Toileting Policy
- Anti Bullying
- Code of Behaviour
- Health and Safety
- Admissions policy
- Parental Complaints Procedures

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

1. To provide clear guidelines to staff, pupils and parents regarding the use of restrictive practices/physical interventions in schools, including the use of time-out and withdrawal where necessary
2. To emphasise a culture within the school of prevention and reduction of the use of physical interventions/restrictive practices
3. To manage serious incidents when they occur
4. To reduce the risks associated with serious incidents such as injuries to self or others or serious damage to property.

SECTION 1 - PHYSICAL CONTACT

There are a number of times when physical contact is used in our school, such as patting a child in affirmation, administering first-aid and meeting intimate care needs. However, our duty of care to others means that it may on occasion also be necessary to use physical contact to restrain a child who is putting themselves or another person at risk of injury. This policy governs the use of these practices. The following table, which is not exhaustive, outlines the circumstances where physical contact may be used in the school:

| Category 1 | Category 2 | Category 3 | Category 4 |
|--|--|--|--|
| Reassurance/ Comfort | Intimate Care/ First Aid/Safety | Non-Contact Restrictions/ Containment | Use of Restrictive Physical Intervention/ Force |
| Pat on arm for praise/ reassurance | Cleaning cuts | Coded access on doors | Disengaging from a grab/ hair pull |
| Holding hand of upset child or to prevent absconding | Toileting | Walls around playgrounds | Escorting a resisting pupil to a safer location |
| High Fives | Lifting a child down from a height | Prevention from participating in certain activities that may pose unacceptable risks | Breaking up a fight/ blocking a pupil's path |
| Handshakes | Dressing/ personal hygiene | | Restraint |
| Guiding hand during handwriting activities | Taking a dangerous object from a child | | Physical withdrawal |

Note on categories of physical contact

Categories 1-3 are necessary in order to take care of and teach our pupils. They are not considered to be restrictive.

Category 4 physical contact (i.e. using restriction or force)

Category 4, however, *is* restrictive and requires careful thought and consideration before being employed by staff. *Any use of such restrictions must be discussed with the Principal and should be recorded in the relevant appendices of this policy. (See 'recording')*

The following principles should be employed by staff who use a restrictive physical intervention:

- best interests of the child
- maximum care, minimum force
- reasonable, proportionate and necessary
- only for reasons of safety (never for sanction, punishment or convenience)
- part of an agreed plan with parents and the pupil where appropriate

Recording

Appendix 2: 'Actions to be taken in the immediate aftermath of the incident'

- To be filled out by staff member after such an incident
- Note: staff should be aware of this checklist at all times as well as filling out after incident

Appendix 3: staff record of incident involving physical restraint

- To be filled out by staff member after such an incident

Appendix 4: staff reflection form following incident involving physical restraint

- To be filled out by staff member after such an incident

Appendix 5: guidance on engaging with parents following an incident of physical restraint

- To be utilised by staff in consultation with the principal after such an incident

Appendix 6: NCSE record form of incident involving physical restraint

- To be filled out by staff member after such an incident. To be sent to the NCSE by the principal

Notes for principal:

- The principal will retain a copy of all the above filled-out appendices.
- The principal will also consult the below table of checks after the incident

| CHECK | RECORD | REPORT TO | REVIEW (if necessary) |
|--|--|---|---|
| -Has anyone been physically hurt? (pupils or staff) -Is medical attention required? -Does anyone need a drink of water/rest? | -Check Incident Report and decide if any follow up is required -If injuries were sustained, fill out accident report for insurance purposes | -Parents / guardians -BoM if necessary -Insurers if medical attention was necessary | -Positive Handling Plan -Policy Guidance (CSS Risk Assessment and associated policies) -Staff training e.g. MAPA training |

Interim Safety Responses

(Taken from DES Guidelines “Understanding behaviours of concern and responding to crisis situations”)

In the event of an unexpected crisis situation or when the cause of a student’s behaviour is not yet established, prioritising the safety of both the distressed student and those around them is crucial. To address such situations the following process is recommended:

Dynamic Risk assessment: Conduct a brief, on the spot assessment to adaptively manage risks in the ever-changing context. Key components of a dynamic risk assessment in crisis situations are:

- *Step Back:* Evaluate whether immediate intervention is necessary.
- *Assess threat:* Consider the student (s), staff, objects, environment and situational factors.
- *Find Help:* If required, seek assistance from colleagues or use the physical environment to reduce risks.
- *Evaluate options:* Is there another option available in the circumstances for preventing harm?
 De-escalation approaches, diverting, changing staff to allow for co-regulation involving a staff member who the student feels connected to, or use of physical restraint.
- *Continual Monitoring:* Re-evaluate the situation and monitor risk levels.

SECTION 2 - PREVENTION

The school seeks in the first instance to be proactive at all times to prevent and minimise the need to use physical interventions and restrictive practices by employing de-escalation strategies and environmental alterations as follows:

1. De-escalation Strategies (This list is not exhaustive)

Sensory breaks, calm stance and facial expression of staff, careful use of tone of voice and choice of words by staff, change of staff, distraction/diversion, use of humour, negotiation, offering choices, outlining limits/boundaries, positive reminders, planned ignoring, reassurance, short tasks only, time given to process/cool down, verbal supports, visual schedules, praise, use of rewards, close supervision.

2. Environmental Alterations (This list is not exhaustive)

Comfort areas, learning support rooms, sensory break rooms, 1:1 teaching areas, access to preferred activities where possible, access to preferred or skilled staff where possible and appropriate, timetables organised to minimise risks, opportunities provided to 'burn off energy', locks on some doors, reduced access to equipment in some rooms, coded access to front door

3. Pupils with Positive Handling Plans (see Section 3 below) are prioritised for meetings with staff and parents/guardians to discuss and review prevention strategies.

SECTION 3 - POSITIVE HANDLING PLANS (see Appendix 1)

These are devised for pupils assessed as being of greatest risk of needing restrictive physical interventions. Pupils who require such plans may be referred to the school's assigned NEPS (National Educational Psychology Service) psychologist. Other multi-disciplinary support services may also be necessary (e.g. CDNT [Children's Disability Network Team]).

This plan should ideally contain the following:

- a brief history of the pupil
- a brief outline of likes/dislikes and known triggers
- a functional assessment of the behaviour using information from several sources such as parents, previous staff, carers, and appropriate behavioural assessment charts and graphs
- a multi-element behaviour support plan outlining environmental alterations, direct interventions, skills teaching and reactive strategies
- de-escalation strategies to employ when behaviours start to occur
- recommended physical interventions which may be employed when de-escalation strategies are unsuccessful or not possible
- planned reviews of any recommended restrictive practices
- a list of persons to whom the plan needs to be communicated
- It should be signed by parents/guardians and Principal.

SECTION 4 - THE FOLLOWING PERSONS ARE AUTHORISED TO USE RESTRAINT/ FORCE IN THE SCHOOL IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OUTLINED BELOW:

A. Unforeseen or Emergency Situations: e.g. a child suddenly tries to climb over a fence or run out on a road, or attempts to hurt another unexpectedly – **all staff** must use their judgement and take appropriate action to safeguard pupils, acting 'in loco parentis' if necessary.

B. Pupils with Positive Handling Plans: The school will endeavour to ensure that staff with up-to-date training and knowledge of the pupil's plan are available to these pupils. In the event that this is not possible, any staff member should take appropriate action to safeguard the situation whilst calling for assistance from trained staff.

SECTION 5 – USING PHYSICAL CONTACT THAT INVOLVES RESTRAINT

If a restraint is used, staff must ask themselves the following questions:

- Am I using the minimum force for the shortest time?
- Can I reduce the amount of pressure?
- How best can I communicate with the child and with other staff?
- Should I ask someone else to take over?

SECTION 6 - LAST RESORT/EARLY INTERVENTION

Force or restraint should be used as a last resort. This does not mean that all other possible strategies must be tried and tested beforehand, it means that staff must make a considered judgement balancing the risks involved, thus allowing informed decisions be made. Some children may have recognisable or repeated patterns of behaviour which alert staff to a developing crisis. Early action may prevent a risk of injury, thus justifying the use of the physical intervention. The child's Positive Handling Plan should reflect this.

SECTION 7 - USING TIME-OUT/WITHDRAWAL/MOVEMENT BREAKS

Sometimes a child cannot manage in a classroom setting for a variety of reasons and needs to be withdrawn to allow teaching and learning to continue for the rest of the pupils. This can happen in 3 ways:

- 1. Time-Out** – This may be used informally for pupils who need time or space to calm/ cool down, i.e. child is encouraged or prompted to move to another table, chair or designated classroom area for a short period of time or may be sent 'on a message'. The purpose of this is to divert or distract the pupil.

- 2. Withdrawal/Comfort** – This may be used to move a child to another place outside of the classroom where he or she is continually supported or monitored by staff either inside or outside the area the child is in. This may involve physically intervening to move the child and/or preventing the child from leaving the area until staff consider that it is safe to do so. Staff must continuously attempt to distract or divert the child and return the child to his/her classroom as soon as it is safe to do so. This may take some time if the pupil demonstrates that he/she requires a break from activities that he/she finds over-stimulating. The purpose of this is to safeguard pupils and staff in situations that have the potential to be high risk to themselves or others.

- 3. Seclusion** – Seclusion is the act of placing a child in any environment in which they are alone and physically prevented from leaving. This includes where a student believes they cannot leave the space, even though no physical block is evident. Seclusion is not used in school under any circumstances.

SECTION 8 - COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS:

The school seeks to engage positively with parents regarding all aspects of their child's education, care and management. The school will endeavour to keep parents/guardians informed of any behaviours of concern in a manner that is reasonable and in the best interests of the child. This will take the form of meetings, phone calls, diaries or letters.

- Parents wishing to make complaint should refer to the Parental Complaints Procedure contained in the school parental communication policy.

SECTION 9 - REVIEW PROCEDURES

This policy was first ratified in January 2023. It was reviewed in **January 2025** as a response to DES Circular 81/2024. It will continue to be reviewed as part of the school rolling five-year policy review system or earlier if necessary. As with all policy reviews, it is made available to staff, parent association members and BoM before final ratification. Parents are made aware of policy reviews as they happen and shared via the school website.

Signed:


Chairperson: Brian Mulvey **date:** 29/1/25

Brian Mulvey

Principal: David Dempsey **date:** 20/1/25

David Dempsey

Version Control

| | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Document Name | PPS Policy on Physical Contact |  |
| Version Reference | 1.3 | |
| Document Owner | David Dempsey | |
| Approved by | B.M | |
| Date | 20/1/25 | |

Appendix 1 - POSITIVE HANDLING PLAN

| Pupil's Name & D.O.B. | Names of staff and parents involved in devising this plan | Start Date | Date Plan Discontinued |
|-----------------------|---|------------|------------------------|
| | | | |

1. **Background Information** (diagnosis, medical, allergies, medication, sight, hearing, etc.):

2. **Profile of child** (triggers, likes, dislikes, etc.):

3. **Functional Assessment of Behaviour:**

| Antecedent | Behaviour | Occurrence | Function (escape, attention, tangible, sensory) | Consequence (eg child avoided or gained something) |
|------------|-----------|------------|--|---|
| | | | | |

4. Behaviour Support Plan:

| Environmental Alteration | Direct Intervention (control of antecedents) | Skills Teaching (coping, tolerance, function, general) | Reactive Strategies (see 5) |
|--------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|
| | | | |

5. Reactive Strategies:

| | What you see | What you do |
|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Anxious phase | | |
| Escalation Phase | | |
| Crisis Phase | | |
| Recovery Phase | | |

6. Recommended Physical Interventions for this child (as per policy guidelines and training):

| Non-contact Restrictions / Containment | Disengagement strategy | Physical Intervention | Use of support room for withdrawal |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | | | |

7. Review Dates & Comments:

8. Incident Diary:

9. Plan communicated to: (signed and dated)

Parent(s)/guardians:

date: _____

Relevant staff member(s):

date: _____

Principal:

date: _____

Appendix 2

Checklist: Actions to be taken in the immediate aftermath of an incident involving category 4 physical intervention i.e. use of force

Actions to be taken in the immediate aftermath of the incident:

| Action | To be carried out by: | Completed (Tick) |
|---|-----------------------|------------------|
| Check that all parties involved are safe. | | |
| Ensure any injuries are cared for (e.g., medical attention if necessary). | | |
| Clear the area of bystanders. | | |
| Remove peers if possible. | | |
| Have a supporting adult remain with the student involved (a preferred person if possible). | | |
| Give the student space and time to regain composure. Keep language to a minimum. | | |
| When possible, guide the student to a self-regulation space. Show care in a practical way e.g., offer a drink, access to a calming activity, space to pace. | | |
| Inform the parents/guardians that an incident has occurred and make initial arrangements for a follow-up meeting. | | |
| Inform the school principal. Inform the Board of Management/ETB of the school. | | |
| If possible and where appropriate, the student(s) involved should remain in school for the remainder of the day with opportunities to engage in positive activities with preferred staff. At the earliest appropriate time, make efforts to repair the impacted relationships. Try to re-establish routines. Make things as clear and predictable as possible. | | |
| All staff members involved and if necessary those who observed the incident must complete the record of Physical Restraint (appendix 3) before the end of the working day unless they are unable to do so though injury or being traumatized. | | |

Further actions:

| Action | To be carried out by: | Completed (Tick) |
|---|-----------------------|------------------|
| Maintain regular contact with all involved: parents, students, school staff to ensure the wellbeing of all concerned. | | |
| Hold a review meeting with relevant staff to review the incident and to plan for the future (see Staff Reflection Form in Resource 2). This will inform the drafting or review of the Support Plan. | | |
| Conduct a follow-up meeting with parents/guardians to review the Incident Report and the staff reflection forms. This meeting should be documented and any changes to the Support Plan agreed, recorded and added (with all the above forms) to the Student Support File. | | |
| Make parents aware of appropriate avenues to follow should they have concerns following the meetings. | | |
| Make staff members aware of the services provided by EAS (Employee Assistance Service "Wellbeing Together"). | | |
| Inform the Designated Liaison Person (DLP), if necessary, and adhere as appropriate to the Child Safeguarding Statement. | | |
| Inform any outside agencies which may be required, (e.g. HSA, Gardaí). | | |
| Consult with outside agencies as appropriate (NEPS, CNDT, HSE etc.). | | |
| Register the incident in the school's incident report book. | | |
| Report the incident to the NCSE. | | |

Resource 1:

Sample Record of Incident involving Physical Restraint

(In line with a rights based approach the language used in this record needs to be objective, factual and non-judgemental)

Student Location

Date of incident: Time Duration

Name of other students and any staff directly involved and who observed the incident:

1. DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT

2. DESCRIBE WHAT WAS HAPPENING IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT

(e.g., activities that the student was engaged in; behaviours of other students; changes to the environment or the usual routine, etc.).

3. DESCRIBE WHAT HAPPENED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE INCIDENT

(staff responses, reactions of students, any other consequences)

Please complete the following (tick all applicable boxes):

4. CATEGORIES OF BEHAVIOUR

(i) Imminent danger of:

Injury to self

Injury to peer

Injury to staff

(ii) Injury to:

a) Self

b) Peer

c) Staff

5. STAFF RESPONSE (Interventions used):

6. Date of development/review of Student Support Plan

Date:

Signed (Principal)

Date:

Signed (Staff (Member)

Date:

Resource 2:

Sample Staff reflection form following an incident of physical restraint⁴

For use by individual teachers for self-reflection to inform future actions and/or

For use by groups of teachers for staff reflection at a meeting to inform future actions

(The language used in this record needs to be objective, factual and non-judgemental)

Events leading to the incident - Describe what was happening before the behaviour started to escalate. What was the student doing? What do you think might have triggered the behaviour? How were other students reacting to the student?

Behaviour of the student - What did you notice about the student's behaviour that alerted you that they were struggling to cope? Think about the way they looked, for example, facial expressions, physical signs, language.

What message do you believe the student was trying to communicate during this incident?

⁴ Adapted from Physical Restraint and Seclusion Guidelines for Registered Schools in New Zealand

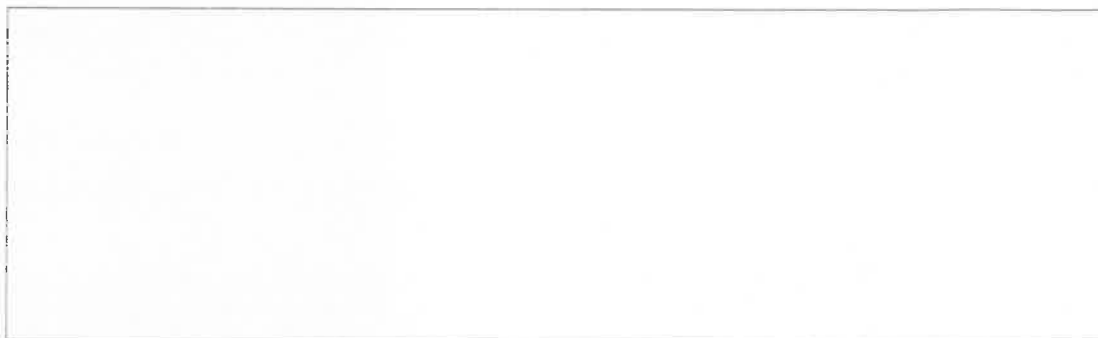
What did you try before the restraint? - Describe the alternative techniques and interventions tried to prevent the emergency, including a description of the de-escalation strategies you used. What was the response of the student?

The restraint method used - Describe the nature of the physical restraint. Include the type of restraint, the duration and the number of people that participated.

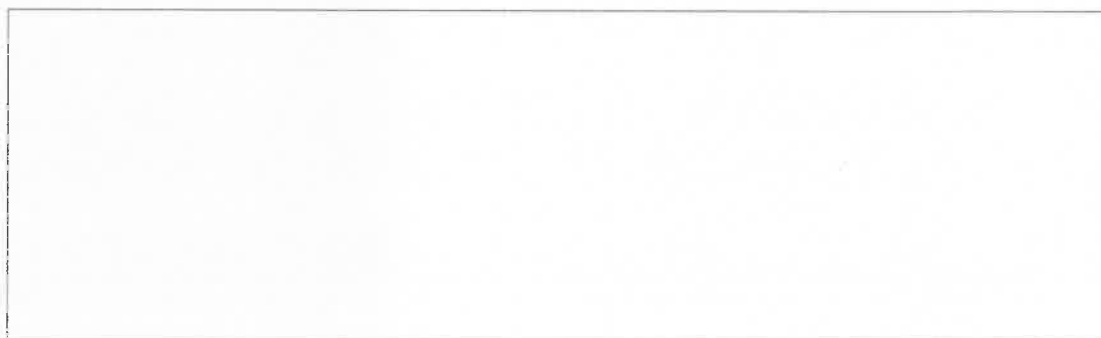
Monitoring - Describe how the student's physical and emotional distress was monitored while they were restrained.

After the restraint ended - Describe the mood of the student following the restraint. What help and support were they offered or did they request.

How about you? - How are you feeling and what support do you need? How about others?



Next Steps? - Plan for maintaining/repairing relationships with the student: What could be done differently in the future to prevent the need for restraint? E.g. review of environment, communication skills, learning needs, health check, sensory needs, emotional wellbeing etc.



This process should inform a review of the student's support plan, in consultation with the student, parents/guardians, and a review of whole school policy and practice.

Resource 3:

Guidance on engaging with parents following an incident of physical restraint

If it has been necessary for school staff to use physical restraint with a student, it is essential to inform the parent/guardian as soon as possible (at a minimum before the student goes home) by phone. This should be followed up with a written report and a meeting with the parents.

Incidents where physical restraint has been used can be upsetting for parents, the student and staff alike. It is important, during all interactions after an incident that all parties treat each other with respect and focus on child-centred solutions.

When a follow-up meeting with parents is convened, the agenda should include:

- A discussion of the incident:
 - What led to the incident?
 - What happened during the incident?
 - What happened after the incident, including any injuries to the student or staff member?
- A discussion of possible causes of the incident and future planning.
- Agreed minutes of the meeting.

The principal should open the meeting with a statement that acknowledges what has happened and the stress it may have caused all parties. The principal will set out that the best interest of the student is the focus of the meeting for everyone present.

It is important the parents are given adequate time to discuss the incident as they may have suggestions that can be incorporated into a support plan for the student to avoid future incidents.

If not already in place, thought should be given to enhancing home-school communications, for example a home-school diary. This will allow for communication on issues that may impact on behaviour such as a bad night's sleep, heightened sensory issues and medication changes.

If a parent is unhappy about how the school responded to the incident, they should be made aware of the school's formal complaints procedure.

Resource 4:

NCSE Record of Incident involving Physical Restraint Form

(In line with a rights-based approach the language used in this record needs to be objective, factual, and non-judgmental)

No personal details of person/s involved should be included in this report.

| School details | | | |
|--|--|------|--|
| School Name | | | |
| School roll number | | | |
| Student details | | | |
| Age of student | | | |
| Confirmed Special Educational Need, (if applicable) | | | |
| Details of incident | | | |
| Date | | Time | |
| Location | | | |
| Duration | | | |
| Description of the incident | | | |
| DESCRIBE WHAT WAS HAPPENING IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT (e.g., activities that the student was engaged in; behaviours of other students; changes to the environment or the usual routine, etc.). | | | |
| | | | |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>DESCRIBE WHAT HAPPENED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE INCIDENT (staff responses, reactions of students, any other consequences)</p> | |
| <p> </p> | |
| <p>Any other details deemed relevant in relation to the incident</p> | |
| <p> </p> | |
| Report completed by | |
| Designation | |
| Date | |
| <p>Report should be forwarded to the following dedicated email account: bocreports@ncse.ie</p> | |