

Physical Intervention Policy

Overview and legal framework

This policy provides a framework for the use of Physical Intervention within Holton Sleaford Independent School (HSIS). It incorporates guidance under Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 and Department for Education (DfE) guidance (*Use of Reasonable Force – Advice for Proprietors, Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies*). Physical intervention by staff must always align with the concept of “Reasonable Force” and be used strictly as a last resort when all non-physical de-escalation strategies have been exhausted.

Physical intervention is never viewed in isolation at HSIS. It represents one element of our broader behaviour management and educational framework and is applied with full consideration of the student’s age, gender, stature, cultural background, and medical history.

Definition and scope of reasonable force

There is no single legal definition of reasonable force. The use of force can only be regarded as reasonable if the specific circumstances warrant it, and the degree of force employed is strictly proportionate to the level of challenging behaviour presented or the consequences it is intended to prevent.

If authorised by the Proprietor and Head of School, staff may use such force as is reasonable to prevent a pupil from:

- Committing a criminal offence.
- Injuring themselves or others.
- Damaging property (including their own).
- Behaving in a way that is prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline in the school, whether in the classroom or elsewhere where staff have lawful control.

Permitted and prohibited uses of force

Schools can use reasonable force to:

- Remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow instructions to leave.
- Prevent a pupil from behaving in a way that disrupts a school event, trip, or visit.
- Prevent a pupil from leaving a classroom where allowing them to leave would risk their safety or disrupt others.

- Prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or stop a fight in the playground.
- Restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

Schools CANNOT:

- Use force as a punishment. It is strictly unlawful to use physical force as a disciplinary penalty.

Graduated techniques and physical holds

Staff undergo annual physical intervention training covering a graded and gradual framework of guides, escorts, and restraints ranging from least intrusive to most intrusive. Any intervention must apply the minimum necessary force for the shortest possible duration.

A calm, considered approach is essential. Where circumstances warrant physical support, staff may:

- Physically interpose between pupils.
- Lead a pupil by the arm or shepherd them by placing a hand in the centre of the back.
- Apply holding, pushing, or pulling techniques consistent with reasonable force.
- Apply restrictive holds in extreme or high-risk situations.

Graduated Restraint Techniques Summary:

- **1-2 Person Standing or Walking:** Friendly Hold, Single Elbow, Double Elbow, Shield.
- **2 Person Standing or Sitting:** Single Elbow (1 staff each side), Arms in Rest Position, Shield.
- **2 Person Ground Recovery:** Friendly Hold, Single Elbow, Double Elbow, Shield.
- **3-5 Person Ground Hold:** 2 staff restraining arms (1 each side), 1-2 staff restraining feet, 1 staff member positioned at the head monitoring breathing and airway.

High Risk Warning: Ground recovery holds carry the highest physical risk. No weight or pressure may ever be applied to a pupil's torso. Training emphasises personal space, body language, and verbal de-escalation prior to physical engagement.

Categories of physical intervention

Emergency interventions

Emergency interventions involve employing physical techniques in immediate response to an unforeseen incident. This occurs when all de-escalation strategies have failed or an acute situation requires a rapid physical response to maintain safety (e.g., a child running toward a busy road or initiating physical violence).

Planned interventions

Planned interventions are agreed physical responses to known, recurring target behaviours. Planned interventions are formally documented in the student's Positive Handling Plan (PHP), which is linked to their Behaviour Management Plan (BMP) and reviewed on a half-termly basis.

A Positive Handling Plan and its supporting risk assessment must be:

- Clear, manageable, and understood by all staff interacting with the student.
- Focused entirely on the specific behaviour rather than the child.
- Aimed primarily at de-escalation and, where possible, functionally incompatible with the target behaviour.
- Balanced against the potential risks involved if physical intervention is not used.

Preventative and reactive principles

Preventative strategies need to be:

- Clear and understood by all staff interacting with the individual.
- Based on structured assessment and discussion regarding potential causes of challenging behaviour.
- Functionally incompatible with the target behaviour wherever possible.

Reactive strategies need to be:

- Clear, manageable, and focused on the behaviour rather than the child.
- Flexible and aimed primarily at de-escalation.

Reporting, monitoring, and medical checks

Accurate reporting and monitoring of physical interventions are mandatory to ensure protection for both staff and pupils, and to track behavioural patterns across time and locations.

- **Same-Day Reporting:** Formal reporting of any physical intervention must be completed on the day of the incident via SchoolPod.
- **Medical Checks:** A staff member involved in or witnessing the incident must conduct a medical check for the pupil immediately following the intervention and record the findings.
- **Documentation:** Completed physical management forms must be signed and dated by all involved staff and witnesses, filed on SchoolPod, and lodged with the main office.

Policy status and compliance information

Policy Status: Approved

Written By: Daniel Laughton (18/11/2025)

Approved By: Mike Whatton (18/11/2025)

Signed: On behalf of Holton Independent Schools

Date Sent to Governors: *None / Pending*

Date Approved by Governors: *None / Pending*

Due for Review: 18/11/2026