



PHYSICAL INTERVENTION POLICY

Last Review Date	August 2025
Next Review Date	August 2026
Version	V2.17/09/25
Changes since previous review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guidance on updating and reviewing student support plans• Relevant Legal & Legislative framework updated along with list of definitions• Procedures for injuries during restraint updated• Debriefing process clearly outlined
Policy Reviewer	Director – Kane Wilson

Lead Coordinator of Safeguarding and Wellbeing: Helen McGloughlin

POLICY

The Ark is committed to developing an ethos where the use of physical restraint will not be necessary. It is the policy of The Ark to promote a safe and productive workplace and educational environment for its employees and learners, and to ensure that every learner is free from the unreasonable use of physical restraint.

Emergency circumstances may occur which support the need for physical restraint after other less intrusive alternatives such as physical intervention have failed or been deemed inappropriate. In order that staff may act appropriately in difficult circumstances, the policy seeks to clarify where reasonable force might be used as a last resort and provide guidance to ensure staff are clear about their role in order that both their own rights and those of the learners are protected.

This policy seeks to ensure that:

- Students and staff are safe from harm.
- Students are supported to re-regulate themselves through non-physical intervention wherever possible.
- Staff understand the legal framework for when they may use physical intervention and contact.
- Staff use the correct physical intervention and contact in accordance with the national guidance and The Ark ethos of restorative working.
- Staff and students understand The Ark's rights for searching for certain prohibited items.

This policy should be read in conjunction with current The Ark policies on Positive Engagement, Health and Safety and Safeguarding.

DEFINITIONS

The DfE guidance (2013) on the 'Use of Reasonable Force' defines and explains the following terms:

"Reasonable force"

- Physical contact by a staff member with a pupil used to control or restrain the pupil. Must be proportionate to the risk, necessary, and no more force than is needed. Used for a variety of purposes: preventing harm, preventing damage, maintaining order.
- This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a pupil needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.
- Defined in the *Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Section 93)* and clarified in *DfE Guidance: Use of Reasonable Force in Schools (2013, updated 2018)*

"Reasonable in the circumstances"

Force must always be reasonable in the circumstances — meaning:

- It must be proportionate to the consequences it is intended to prevent.
- Staff should use no more force than is needed.
- What is "reasonable" depends on the situation: age, size, understanding, gender, SEND, risk level, and the behaviour being managed.
- Force cannot be used to punish.

"Control"

- The use of physical force to direct a pupil's movement or behaviour (e.g. leading a pupil by the arm, blocking a doorway, separating pupils).

"Restraint"

- means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention

"Power to Use Force"

- The legal authority (under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Section 93) for school staff and those with lawful charge of pupils to use reasonable force.

LEGISLATION & LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This policy has been informed by, and should be read in conjunction with, the following key documents and guidance:

- **Education and Inspections Act 2006** – Section 93: Powers of members of staff to use reasonable force.
- **DfE Guidance: Use of Reasonable Force in Schools** (2013, updated 2018).

- **DfE (2018)** 'Searching, screening and confiscation'
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education** (latest DfE statutory guidance).
- **Children Act 1989 and 2004** – particularly the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children** (statutory guidance, DfE).
- **Human Rights Act 1998** – especially Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) and Article 8 (respect for private and family life).
- **Equality Act 2010** – requirement not to discriminate against pupils with protected characteristics.
- **SEND Code of Practice** (2015) – statutory guidance for supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities.
- **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974** – duty of care towards staff and pupils.

Staff authorised by a nominated member of senior leadership may use such force as is reasonable to prevent a learner from:

- Committing a criminal offence
- Injuring themselves or others
- Damaging property
- Causing disruption

Failure to take action in circumstances that merit it, can be as serious as over-reacting. It may not be a safer option for staff to do nothing when to take action could restore safety.

APPROPRIATENESS OF PHYSICAL INTERVENTION/RESTRAINT

There is no definition of 'reasonable force'. It is not possible to set out comprehensively when it is reasonable to use force, or the degree of force that may reasonably be used. It will always depend on the circumstances of the case, e.g.:

- physical intervention may be considered appropriate to prevent harm occurring some time in the predictable future (e.g. the use of mobile phones as a means of intimidation).
- physical restraint may be considered more appropriate for the removal of a weapon/dangerous object.

In considering the appropriateness of physical intervention/restraint the following should be taken into consideration:

- the learner's age
- gender
- maturity
- culture
- religion
- disability

- comprehension
- physical environment and proximity of other people
- significance for the child of physical contact – taking into account the child's previous experiences and acceptance of touch

PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

Staff should always take pre-emptive steps to avoid the need for physical intervention (e.g. through dialogue and diversion).

Physical intervention by staff, may take the following form:

- physically interposing between learners
- blocking a learner's path
- leading by the arm
- shepherding a learner away by placing a hand in the centre of the back
- pushing
- pulling

All of these actions do not carry the force of physical restraint. As far as possible these actions should only take place in public where the learner and staff have an established relationship.

USE OF PHYSICAL RESTRAINT

Physical restraint should only be used as a last resort when all other strategies have failed, and the learner's behaviour poses a threat of imminent, serious physical harm to himself or herself or others. It should be a **last resort** after all agreed avenues to defuse and de-escalate the situation have been pursued and the staff involved feel that immediate action is required. Whenever possible the administration of physical restraint shall be witnessed by at least one adult not participating in the physical restraint. Only the minimum amount of force necessary shall be used to protect the learner or others from physical injury. Physical restraint will only normally involve containment of a situation prior to the arrival of the police.

IF A YOUNG PERSON IS INJURED DURING A RESTRAINT

The welfare and safety of the young person is paramount. If a child or young person sustains any injury during a restraint or physical intervention, the following protocols must be followed:

1. Immediate Response

- Stop the intervention as soon as it is safe to do so.
- Provide immediate first aid or medical attention as required, in line with The Ark's First Aid Policy.
- If the injury is serious, contact emergency services without delay.

2. Notification

- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or Lead Coordinator must be informed immediately.

- Parents/carers must be contacted as soon as possible on the same day.
- The commissioning school must also be notified.

3. **Recording**

- The incident must be recorded in The Ark's Serious Incident Log, clearly describing the circumstances, type of intervention used, and the nature of the injury.
- A body map should be completed where appropriate.
- All records must be signed and dated by staff involved and counter-signed by a Director.

4. **Safeguarding Consideration**

- If the injury raises safeguarding concerns (e.g. excessive force suspected), the incident must be referred to the DSL, who will follow child protection procedures, including contact with the Leeds Children's Social Work Service or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) if required.

5. **Review**

- The young person's Support Plan and/or Positive Handling Plan must be reviewed within **5 working days** of the incident to reduce the risk of reoccurrence.
- The review should consider de-escalation strategies, triggers, and the suitability of current interventions.
- Restorative conversations with the young person should be offered to support their emotional wellbeing.

6. **Staff Support**

- Staff involved should be offered a debrief and emotional support.
- Where necessary, additional training or refresher training will be provided.

RECORDING AND MONITORING

In the event of physical intervention or restraint having been used, the following procedures are to be followed:

- The circumstances and justification for using physical intervention or restraint must be recorded immediately in The Ark's serious incident book.
- Afterwards the learner should be counselled on why it was necessary to take action. He / she should also be given the opportunity to discuss incidents, either individually or as a group and encouraged to write down their views following an incident.

- Within 12 hours parents/carers will be informed when physical intervention or restraint has been used and will be given the opportunity to discuss the matter with a nominated senior member of staff.
- Within 24 hours a nominated senior member of staff should discuss the incident with the member of staff involved.
- Within 24 hours relevant agencies will be informed if necessary (e.g. Child Protection Team).
- Within 48 hours a full report should be prepared and submitted to the Lead Coordinator.
- Incidents to be monitored by the Directors to ensure compliance with policy and identify any patterns which require intervention – either amongst specific staff or learners or practice in general.
- Where required, further advice support/training to be provided to the staff member concerned.
- Staff meetings to provide a forum for discussion of the incident.

DEBRIEFING ARRANGEMENTS

The use of restraint or physical intervention is a serious measure and must always be followed by structured reflection and review. The purpose of post-incident processes is to safeguard the young person, support staff, and learn from the event to reduce the likelihood of reoccurrence.

1. Immediate Support

- Ensure the young person is safe, calm, and provided with any required medical attention.
- Staff involved should be given an opportunity to regain composure before resuming duties.

2. Debrief with the Young Person

- A debrief should take place as soon as the child is ready and able to engage.
- The conversation should be restorative in nature, allowing the young person to share their perspective and feelings.
- Key points should include: what led to the restraint, what could have been done differently, and how the child can be supported going forward.
- The debrief must be recorded and, where appropriate, shared with parents/carers and the commissioning school.

3. Staff Debrief

- All staff involved must take part in a reflective discussion with a Director or safeguarding lead.
- This should include an honest account of what happened, what went well, and what could be improved.

- Staff wellbeing should be checked, and support offered if required.

4. Incident Review

- The full incident must be recorded in The Ark's Serious Incident Log, using agreed documentation (including body maps if relevant).
- The Director or DSL will review the record for accuracy, proportionality, and safeguarding concerns.
- Serious incidents will be escalated to the local authority

5. Lessons Learned

- Following the review, the young person's Support Plan/Positive Handling Plan must be updated within **5 working days**.
- Patterns and triggers should be identified through monitoring of incidents over time.
- Where necessary, additional training, supervision, or support will be provided to staff.

6. Multi-Agency Feedback

- Outcomes of reviews should be shared with commissioning schools, parents/carers, and other professional bodies working with the child.
- Any safeguarding themes will be reported through the Leeds Children's Services procedures.

TRAINING

All staff to be aware of Section 550A of the Education Act 1996.

Staff exercising intervention or restraint must be authorised by a nominated senior member of staff and have received appropriate training. New employees will receive initial training within the induction process. Further on-going training will take place on a regular basis.

Trained staff are those individuals who have received either basic training in the use of de-escalation techniques or to engage in physical intervention or the more in-depth training to deal with more challenging circumstances requiring physical restraint.

However, these training requirements shall not prohibit any staff member from using reasonable force to protect learners, other persons or themselves from imminent, serious, physical harm.

The Ark will ensure relevant staff have received and are fully trained in using the Team Teach approach. This training will be updated on a regular basis.

STUDENT POSITIVE HANDLING PLANS

Where behavioural records and/or risk assessment identifies a need for a planned approach, PHPs are written for individual children and where possible, these will be designed through multi-agency collaboration in conjunction with the child and their parent/carer.

With parental consent, these plans may be shared with other agencies/services supporting the child to facilitate consistency of approach so far as is possible.

Where a PHP is required, a meeting will take place between The Ark, the pupils school, the child, their parent/carer and any other stakeholder/service where appropriate, to set out a written plan that will identify the key driver and trigger points for a child's behaviour and a gradual and graded system of staff response which may include the application of gradually increasing or decreasing levels of force in response to the child/young person's behaviour.

The purpose of a PHP is to provide all staff with the necessary information to deal with behaviour effectively and consistently, avoiding the need for any physical intervention. The plans do need to cover this however, in the event that all else has failed.

UPDATING SUPPORT PLANS

Support Plans (including Individual Behaviour Plans, Risk Assessments, or Positive Handling Plans) are living documents. They must be regularly updated to ensure that interventions remain safe, proportionate, child-centred, and in line with Leeds City Council's guidance on positive handling and behaviour support.

1. Regular Review

- Support Plans will be reviewed at least **once per term**, or more frequently if required by the commissioning school.
- Reviews must be documented and signed by the designated lead, with updates shared with the school and parents/carers.

2. Following an Incident

- Where restraint or physical intervention has been used, the Support Plan must be reviewed **within 5 working days**.
- Updates should reflect learning from the incident, including de-escalation strategies and restorative approaches to repair relationships.

3. Change in Needs

- Plans must be updated immediately if there is a **significant change** in the pupil's needs, behaviour, triggers, or medical/mental health circumstances.
- Staff are responsible for notifying the safeguarding lead/designated manager if new risks emerge.

4. Multi-Agency Collaboration

- Updates should involve discussion with schools, parents/carers, and, where relevant, external professionals.

- Where a pupil has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), changes must align with their statutory provision.

5. Staff Accountability

- All staff working with the pupil must familiarise themselves with the most up-to-date Support Plan.
- Senior Leaders are responsible for ensuring reviews take place and that plans are securely stored yet accessible to relevant staff.

COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS

This clear physical intervention and restraint policy, adhered to by all staff and shared with parents, should help to avoid complaints from parents. It is unlikely to prevent all complaints however, and a dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation under our Complaints Procedure. If, following preliminary investigations it is deemed necessary, the Directors will contact the LADO in line with our Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

All staff, pupils, parents and Directors should be informed and aware of these policies and procedures and the context in which they apply.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct and Guidance for Safer Working Practice

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Name of the individual:	Date of birth:
Full name and signature of the individual completing this report:	Date of writing this report:
Location of this incident:	Date of the incident:
Full names of other individuals present:	

The following information is an account of what happened before, during, and after the incident.

- Give a comprehensive and accurate account of the incident with specific, clear details.
- Avoid abbreviations and jargon where possible.
- Give details of any restrictive and non-restrictive practices used, including the full names of individuals involved, and the impact it had.

What happened before the incident?

What happened during the incident?

What happened after the incident?	
Start time of any restrictive physical intervention:	Duration of any restrictive physical intervention:
Why was the intervention in the best interests of the individual?	
Describe any injuries and if medical treatment was offered and accepted. <i>Injuries should also be recorded in your organisation's accident book.</i>	
External agencies who have been informed of this incident (if applicable):	
Other supporting records relevant to this incident (if applicable):	

Wherever possible, the viewpoint of the individual should be gathered and recorded using appropriate communication support strategies.

Viewpoint of the individual:	
Signature of the individual (if applicable):	
Was a debriefing offered? Yes/ No	Was a debriefing accepted? Yes/ No

Include any completed debrief form with this report.

Risk assessment implications following this incident:
Follow up actions required:

Name and signature of the person monitoring these records:	Role in this organisation:
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