

Use of Reasonable Force And Positive Handling Policy

<i>Approved by:</i>	<i>Trust Board</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Adopted by:</i>	<i>LGCs</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Last reviewed on:</i>	<i>N/A</i>	
<i>Next review due by:</i>	<i>Summer 2028</i>	

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Introduction

We aim to help, encourage and show God's way to our families, making sure that our Catholic traditions and faith are kept alive. At our LWCET schools, we seek at all times to be witnesses to Jesus Christ and live by the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. We remember this when creating our policies and putting them into practice. Therefore, this policy will reflect the Catholic identity and mission of our schools and the values they proclaim.

1. Rationale

At the Little Way Catholic Education Trust, we believe every child has the right to independence, inclusion, and choice, alongside the opportunity to grow in confidence, emotional wellbeing, and personal development. Some children may find it difficult to regulate their behaviour or understand risk, and in such cases, it is essential that they, and those around them, are kept safe. Our staff have a duty of care to ensure the protection and welfare of all. This policy has been prepared for the support of all teaching and support staff who come into contact with pupils who may need to be positively handled.

Children make sense of themselves and the world through their relationships with others. Positive, consistent relationships with trusted adults are a key factor in healthy emotional and social development. We recognise that some children may have experienced trauma or adverse experiences in their early lives. In these cases, safe and appropriate touch can play a supportive role in helping children feel regulated, connected, and secure.

This policy reflects robust evidence from neurobiology, attachment theory, and child development, all of which highlight the important role of safe, appropriate touch in supporting brain development, emotional resilience, and social learning. As a Trust, we support the use of developmentally-appropriate, evidence-informed strategies – including safe touch – as part of a broader approach to children's wellbeing and emotional growth.

Good professional relationships between staff and pupils are vital to the smooth running of the school. It is recognised that the majority of pupils in school respond positively to the staff in school. This ensures the well-being and safety of all pupils and staff. It is also acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances, staff may need to take action in situations where the use of positive handling may be required. The application of any form of positive handling places staff in a vulnerable situation. It can only be justified according to the circumstances described in this policy. Staff therefore have a responsibility to follow the policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for positive handling. Where positive handling has to be used, it must be recorded using the Positive Handling Incident form.

It is essential that all staff understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate physical contact. Equally, staff must be confident in providing emotional support and psychological containment to distressed pupils, even when this does not involve physical touch. All staff must be familiar with this policy and apply its principles consistently and professionally. This policy should be read in conjunction with the school Behaviour Policy, which sets out the Trust's wider approach to promoting positive relationships and behaviour.

2. Legislation

This policy has due regard to statutory legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- *The Education Act 2011*
- *Equality Act 2010*

- The Children Act 1989
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006, especially sections 93 and 93A
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025

This policy also has due regard to government guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2025) 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'
- DfE (2018) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
- DfE (2026) 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools'

3. Definitions

Physical Contact: Situations in which proper physical contact occurs between staff and pupils, for example in the care of pupils with physical and/or learning disabilities; in PE/games; to comfort pupils.

Physical Intervention: This may be used to divert a pupil from a destructive or disruptive action, for example guiding or leading a pupil by the hand, arm or shoulder with little or no force.

Physical Control/Restraint: This will involve the use of reasonable force when there is an immediate risk to pupils, staff or property. All such incidents must be recorded. 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 all the circumstances of the situation.

4. Types of touch

There are four 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 reassurance and 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. 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 calming, 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 or squeezing an arm.

3. Contact/interactive 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. Positive handling (calming a dysregulated child):

Legal framework and national guidance refers to the 'use of reasonable force' with the intention of protecting pupils and limiting damage to property. National guidance states that reasonable force may be used in the school to:

- *Restrain a pupil who has lost emotional self-control until the situation is diffused.*
- *Limit the amount of harm that the pupil involved can do to themselves or others.*
- *Demonstrate to pupils that they are within a safe environment in which adults can contain pupils' anger and other erratic emotions.*
- *Protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful.*

5. Authorised Staff

At our school, staff are authorised to use physical contact as defined within this policy. All staff have the legal power to use reasonable force to prevent harm, in accordance with DfE guidance to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- 1. causing injury to themselves or others*
- 2. committing a criminal offence*
- 3. damaging property*
- 4. causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.*

However, planned or restrictive physical interventions (including Team Teach holds) must only be carried out by staff who have received appropriate training.

In unplanned or emergency situations, any member of staff may use reasonable force as a last resort to keep pupils or others safe.

Where the use of restraint is necessary on more than one occasion, a positive handling plan will be put in place in agreement with the parents and carers.

The Headteacher is responsible for making clear to whom such authorisation has been given, in what circumstances and settings they may use force and for what duration of time this authorisation will last. The Headteacher will ensure that those authorised are aware of, and understand, what the authorisation entails. Those whom the Headteacher has not authorised will be told what steps to take in the case of an incident where control or restraint is needed, for example to contact an authorised member of staff.

The office staff will keep a list of all staff who are trained. This list will be updated as required when staff are trained. SLT, Team Leaders and the Safeguarding Team will undergo training as appropriate. The training will be renewed as required.

6. Training

Training for appropriate staff, as defined in Section 5, will be made available and will be the responsibility of the Headteacher. No member of staff will be expected to undertake the use of reasonable force without appropriate training. Prior to the provision of training, guidance will be given on action to be taken. Arrangements will be made clear as part of the induction of staff and training will be provided as part of ongoing staff development.

LWCET trusts school leaders to make decisions on training based on their school's individual contexts and needs. When deciding what formal staff training is required, school leaders should ensure that the chosen training reflects the principles of this policy and government guidance.

7. Strategies for Dealing with Challenging Behaviour

Staff consistently use positive strategies to encourage acceptable behaviour and good order. Every effort will be made to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to pupils or staff, property, buildings or the environment.

Where unacceptable behaviour threatens good order and discipline and provokes intervention, some or all of the following approaches should be taken according to the circumstances of the incident:

- Verbal acknowledgement of unacceptable behaviour with request for the pupil to refrain.*
- Further verbal reprimand stating that this is the second request for compliance; an explanation of why observed behaviour is unacceptable; an explanation of what will happen if the unacceptable behaviour continues.*
- Warning of intention to intervene physically and that this will cease when the pupil complies. If possible summon assistance.*
- Physical intervention - reasonable force uses the minimum degree of force to prevent a child harming themselves, others or property.*

8. Types of incidents

The incidents fall into three broad categories:

- Where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury.*
- Where there is a developing risk of injury, or significant damage to property.*
- Where a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order or discipline.*

Examples of situations which fall within one of the first two categories are:

- A pupil attacks a member of staff, or another pupil.*
- Pupils are fighting.*
- A pupil is engaged in, or is on the verge of committing, deliberate damage or vandalism to property.*
- A pupil is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials or objects.*
- A pupil is running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way which he or she might have or cause an accident likely to injure themselves or others.*
- A pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave school (N.B. this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school).*

Examples of situations which fall into the third category are:

- A pupil persistently refuses to obey an order to leave a classroom.*
- A pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson.*

9. Acceptable Measures of Physical Intervention

The use of any degree of force can only be deemed reasonable if:

- a) It is warranted by the circumstances of the incident.*
- b) It is delivered in accordance with the seriousness of the incident and the consequences which it is desired to prevent.*
- c) It is carried out as the minimum to achieve the desired result.*
- d) The age, understanding, needs and gender of the pupil are considered.*
- e) It is likely to achieve the desired result.*

Wherever possible assistance should be sought from another member of staff before intervening.

Physical intervention uses the minimum degree of force necessary for the shortest period of time to prevent a pupil harming themselves, others or property. This form of physical intervention may involve staff:

- *Physically interposing themselves between pupils.*
- *Blocking a pupil's path.*
- *Escorting a pupil.*
- *Shepherding a pupil away.*

In extreme circumstances, trained staff may need to use more restrictive holds, which are recognised Team Teach or SHADES techniques.

Any such measures will be most effective in the context of the school's overall ethos, the way staff exercise their responsibilities and the behaviour management strategies used. Wherever reasonable force is used, staff must keep talking to the pupil.

10. Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving – it should only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. In such circumstances, the pupil is not acting with intent. Seclusion should not be implemented by staff through threat of punishment.

The place to which the pupil is confined should be safe and not feel threatening or intimidating to the pupil. The pupil should be supervised at all times during the period of seclusion. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil should be allowed to leave.

An incident involving the use of seclusion must be recorded and reported in accordance with section 11 on the correct form.

Seclusion is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. There are disciplinary measures that are similar, such as removal from the classroom.

11. Recording

11.1. School Recording

Where physical intervention has been used to manage a pupil, a record of the incident will need to be kept. Where physical control or restraint has been used a record of the incident will be kept by recording it on the Use of Positive Handling Incident Form. This record will be stored electronically for the duration of their time at our school, which will include:

- *The name of the pupil.*
- *Additional needs or circumstances of the pupil.*
- *The date, time, approximate duration and location of the incident.*
- *Staff who were involved.*
- *Brief account of the incident, including what led up to the incident, identified or potential triggers if known, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used, and (where relevant) what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of any physical injuries sustainedAny injuries sustained and medical treatment applied.*
- *Why the use of force was assessed as necessary.*
- *The pupil's account, along with any witness accounts.*

- A full debrief of the incident and any actions taken including any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts.

In addition, specific details of the use of reasonable force will be recorded which will include:

- *How the incident developed.*
- *Attempts made to de-escalate and calm the situation.*
- *The outcome of the incident.*
- *The type of hold utilised by trained staff.*
- *Any damage to property which has resulted.*
- *How parents have been informed. After investigation, a summary of the debrief and actions taken.*

*Any use of reasonable force or physical intervention **must** be recorded as soon as practicable following the incident and normally before staff go off duty.*

*The record **must** be signed by all staff involved and reviewed by the Headteacher or a delegated senior leader.*

*All records **must** be retained in line with safeguarding and data protection requirements.*

The incident must also be reported in line with section 14 of the policy to the governors and the trust.

Staff may find it helpful to seek advice from a senior colleague or professional association/union representative when compiling a report.

After the review of the incident, copies of the report will be placed on the pupil's file and in the school's general file on the use of reasonable force.

Where staff have been involved in an incident involving reasonable force, they should have access to counselling and support. Within the school, this will be made available through the Headteacher. Staff may also contact the Local Authority's or the Trust's support and counselling services.

11.2. Parental Notification

Parents/carers must be informed that physical intervention has taken place. Notification must occur on the same day wherever reasonably practicable.

Notification may be made verbally (for example, by telephone) in the first instance. Where verbal notification is used, this must be followed by written confirmation.

The written confirmation must:

- *confirm that physical intervention occurred*
- *confirm that the incident has been recorded in line with Trust policy*
- *invite parents/carers to acknowledge receipt of the information*

The method, date, and time of parental notification must be recorded. Parents/carers must be asked to acknowledge receipt of the written notification. Acknowledgement confirms notification only and does not constitute agreement with, or consent to, the actions taken.

Where acknowledgement is not received, this must be recorded. Lack of acknowledgement does not invalidate notification.

12. Action After an Incident

The Headteacher will ensure that each incident is reviewed and investigated further as required. If further action is required in relation to a member of staff or a pupil, this will be pursued through the appropriate procedure:

- *Child Protection Procedure (this may involve investigations by Police and/or Social Services)*
- *Staff Facing Allegations of Misconduct Procedure*
- *Staff or Pupil Disciplinary Procedure*
- *School Behaviour Policy*
- *Suspensions/Exclusions Procedure*

The member of staff involved will be kept informed of any action taken.

In the case of any action concerning a member of staff, they will be advised to seek advice from their professional association/union.

13. Complaints

The availability of a clear policy about reasonable force and early involvement of parents should reduce the likelihood of complaints. Still, it may not eliminate them.

Any complaints about staff will be dealt with under the School's Complaints Procedure.

If an allegation regarding inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions is made against a member of staff, the procedures in Keeping Children Safe in Education should be followed.

14. Monitoring of Incidents

Whenever a member of staff has occasion to use reasonable force or physical intervention, this **must** be recorded and documented in line with this policy.

Monitoring of incidents **must** be undertaken by the Headteacher to ensure that staff are following correct procedures and to identify any safeguarding, behaviour, or training implications. This monitoring will also alert the Headteacher to the needs of any pupil(s) whose behaviour may require review of risk assessments, behaviour support plans, or additional support.

This process **must** address patterns of incidents and evaluate trends which may be emerging in particular year groups or across the school as a whole.

14.1 School-level analysis

Schools **must** collate and analyse data relating to the use of reasonable force and physical intervention. This analysis **must** be used by school leaders to:

- Identify and implement improvements to policies and practices, particularly where approaches have been used for some time but have not been effective.
- Identify areas of learning and development for school staff, supporting specific teams or individuals to improve understanding and practice.
- Understand pupils' repeat patterns and triggers in order to interrogate the effectiveness of existing support measures and, where appropriate, to share this information with staff working with those pupils and with parents/carers, to establish a behaviour support plan or revise an existing plan.
- Identify any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to pupils who share protected characteristics, have SEND, or other types of vulnerability.

14.2 Local Governing Committee scrutiny

The Local Governing Committee **must** receive summary information relating to the use of reasonable force and physical intervention as part of the school's safeguarding reporting cycle.

Information provided to the Local Governing Committee **must**:

- be anonymised and aggregated
- focus on patterns, frequency, trends, and actions taken
- avoid detailed individual case narratives, except where escalation is required

In reviewing this information, the Local Governing Committee **must** use it to:

- Seek assurance that policies and procedures are being applied consistently and proportionately.
- Challenge whether approaches in use are effective in reducing risk and the need for restrictive intervention.
- Consider whether staff training and development needs have been identified and addressed.
- Scrutinise how effectively the school understands and responds to pupils' repeat patterns and triggers.
- Monitor for any disproportionate impact on pupils with protected characteristics, SEND, or other vulnerabilities.

The Local Governing Committee **must** not seek to investigate individual incidents or adjudicate specific cases.

14.3 Trust oversight and monitoring

Summary information on the use of reasonable force and physical intervention **must** be reported to the Trust in accordance with Trust safeguarding reporting arrangements.

Trust-level reporting **must**:

- be provided at least termly
- be aggregated at school level
- focus on assurance, proportionality, trends, and risk indicators

In addition to routine reporting, schools **must** notify the Trust promptly where:

- there is repeated use of physical intervention involving the same pupil
- there is a significant increase in incidents
- analysis indicates potential disproportionate impact on pupils with SEND or other vulnerabilities
- an incident gives rise to a safeguarding concern, complaint, or external referral

The Trust **must** use this information to monitor consistency of practice across schools, identify Trust-wide training or policy implications, and provide assurance to Trustees.

14.4 Proportionate analysis

The Local Governing Committee and the Trust **must** consider the limitations of data and what can reasonably be inferred from it. Analysis **must** be proportionate and avoid over-interpreting small subgroups of pupils, while maintaining appropriate scrutiny and challenge.

School Name

Use of Reasonable Force/Seclusion - Report

Name of pupil																			
Pupil additional needs (e.g. SEND, Behaviour Plan)																			
Member/s of staff involved																			
Date of incident																			
Time of incident																			
Location of incident																			
Approx Duration of incident																			
Type of reasonable force applied (hold utilized/seclusion) and duration																			
Degree of force used																			
Account of Incident including: • any antecedents or triggers • any de-escalation strategies used • damage to any property	Details of the behaviour requiring use of physical intervention including attempts at de-escalation: <table border="0"> <tr> <td>☐ Humour</td> <td>☐ Verbal advice and support</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ Firm clear directions</td> <td>☐ Negotiation</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ Limited choices</td> <td>☐ Distraction</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ Diversion</td> <td>☐ Reassurance</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ Planned ignoring</td> <td>☐ Contingent touch</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ Calm talking</td> <td>☐ Calm stance</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ Patience</td> <td>☐ Withdrawal offered</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ Withdrawal directed</td> <td>☐ Swap adult</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☐ Reminders about consequences</td> <td>☐ Success reminders</td> </tr> </table>	☐ Humour	☐ Verbal advice and support	☐ Firm clear directions	☐ Negotiation	☐ Limited choices	☐ Distraction	☐ Diversion	☐ Reassurance	☐ Planned ignoring	☐ Contingent touch	☐ Calm talking	☐ Calm stance	☐ Patience	☐ Withdrawal offered	☐ Withdrawal directed	☐ Swap adult	☐ Reminders about consequences	☐ Success reminders
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☐ Calm talking	☐ Calm stance																		
☐ Patience	☐ Withdrawal offered																		
☐ Withdrawal directed	☐ Swap adult																		
☐ Reminders about consequences	☐ Success reminders																		

Why was the use of force/seclusion assessed as necessary in this instance?	
If there is a Behaviour Support Plan in place – was it followed?	
Any injuries sustained (if applicable)	
Was any medical treatment needed?	
Pupil's account	
Witness account (if applicable)	
How were parent's notified?	
Debriefing / follow-up actions	

Form completed by:		
Signature:		
Date:		
I can confirm that I have been notified about the reasonable force used.	Signed by Parent:	Date: