

MEATH GREEN JUNIOR SCHOOL



POLICY FOR THE USE OF RESTRICTIVE PHYSICAL INTERVENTION and PHYSICAL CONTACT WITHIN SCHOOL

Preamble

Introduction

Definition of 'restrictive physical intervention'

Assessing the appropriateness of Restrictive Physical Interventions

Principles for the use of restrictive physical interventions

Other physical contact with pupils

Developing a Positive Handling Plan

Guidance and training

Complaints

Governor Committee Responsible:	Full Governing Body
Governors Signature:	
Policy Originator:	Headteachers
Review Period:	Annual
Status:	Statutory
Reviewed:	Summer Term 2022
Next Review Date:	Summer Term 2023

1. Preamble

All staff, governors, parents and pupils need to be aware of this policy which should be read in conjunction with the School's Pupil Behaviour Policy. It is an expectation of the School's Governors that the Pupil Behaviour Policy should include the power to use reasonable force.

2. Introduction

At Meath Green Junior School we believe that pupils need to be safe, know how to behave and show respect for each other. Pupils need to know that the adults around them are able to manage them safely and confidently.

The majority of pupils behave well and conform to the expectations of our school. For a very small minority of pupils the use of restrictive physical intervention may be needed. We have a responsibility to operate an effective behaviour policy that encompasses preventative strategies for tackling inappropriate behaviour in relation to the whole school, each class, and individual pupils.

All School staff who take responsibility for children need to be able to manage inappropriate risk and behaviour. They need to know what options are open to them, and they need to be free of undue worries about the risks of legal action against them if they use appropriate physical intervention. Parents need to know that their children are safe with us and children need to feel that they are safe too.

Ultimately our policy is concerned with ensuring all staff act in the best interests of our pupils both individually and corporately.

3. Definition of 'restrictive physical intervention'

Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) can be used by any member of staff at the school as well as other people whom the head teacher has temporarily put in charge of pupils, such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying pupils. RPI may be used to prevent a pupil:

- committing a criminal offence
- injuring themselves or others
- causing damage to property
- engaging in any behaviour that is prejudicial to maintain the good order and discipline at the school
- absconding from the school premises or the defined limits on a school visit

"Restrictive Physical Intervention" is the term used to include interventions where physical contact using reasonable force is used. There is no legal definition of "reasonable force". However, there are relevant guidelines:

- The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of an incident warrant it
- The degree of force must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or consequences it is intended to prevent
- When force is used on pupils with SEN or disabilities it must also take into account the information and understanding of the needs of the pupil concerned

The definition of physical force also includes the use of mechanical devices (e.g. splints on the pupil prescribed by medical colleagues to prevent self-injury), forcible seclusion or use of locked doors and windows. It is important for staff to note that, although no

physical contact may be made in the latter situations, this is still regarded as a Restrictive Physical Intervention.

4. Assessing the appropriateness of Restrictive Physical Interventions

RPI is an act of care and control, not a sanction or punishment.

It is always unlawful to use force of any kind as a punishment or to inflict pain.

While RPI will usually occur as a response to a period of uncontrolled behaviour, there are occasions when RPI may become immediately necessary, for example in a situation of clear danger or extreme urgency. Certain pupils may become distressed, agitated, and out of control, and need calming with a brief Restrictive Physical Intervention that is un-resisted after a few seconds. Schools do not require parental consent to use reasonable force on a pupil.

The head teachers (or other authorised staff) can use reasonable force to conduct a search for “prohibited items, for example, knives and weapons, alcohol, drugs, stolen items, tobacco and cigarettes, fireworks, pornographic images, articles likely to be used to commit or cause an offence or cause personal injury. Force can not be used to search for items banned under individual school rules.”

Where a member of staff has acted within the law (that is they have used reasonable force in order to prevent injury, damage to property or disorder) they will be fully supported by the school personnel who have a duty of care to their staff and value their efforts to rectify difficult situations before they escalate. This duty of care takes note of the fact that staff have a responsibility to protect themselves and others around them.”

5. Principles for the use of restrictive physical interventions

The principles relating to the intervention are:

- Staff will only use RPI when there are good grounds for believing that immediate action is necessary and in the pupil’s and/or other pupil’s best interests
- Staff will take steps in advance to avoid the need for RPI through dialogue and diversion, at the level of understanding of the child or young person
- Only the minimum force necessary will be used to prevent severe distress, injury, or damage
- Staff will ensure that the intervention used was in keeping with the incident
- Every effort will be made to secure the presence of other staff, and these staff may act as assistants and/or witnesses
- As soon as it is safe to do so RPI will be relaxed to allow the pupil to regain self-control
- A distinction will be maintained between the use of a one-off intervention which is appropriate to a particular circumstance, and the using of it repeatedly as a regular feature of school policy
- Escalation in the use of RPI will be avoided at all costs, especially if it would make the overall situation more destructive and unmanageable
- The age, understanding, and competence of the individual pupil will always be taken into account
- In developing Individual Education/Behaviour Plans, consideration will be given to approaches appropriate to each pupil’s circumstance

- Procedures are in place, through the pastoral system of the school, for supporting and debriefing pupils and staff after every incident of RPI, as it is essential to safeguard the emotional well-being of all involved at these times
- After incidents of RPI there will be opportunity to de-brief and consider Child Protection issues

6. Other physical contact with pupils

In line with other schools we do not have a no-contact policy as this might jeopardise a teacher's duty of care.

There are occasions when staff will make physical contact with pupils for a variety of appropriate reasons, for example:

- to comfort a pupil in distress (in an age-appropriate manner)
- to gently direct pupil
- to congratulate a pupil (e.g., via a handshake)
- for curricular reasons (for example in PE, Drama, or to explain how a musical instrument or tool is to be held) etc)
- in an emergency to avert danger to the pupil or (e.g., when giving first aid; life-saving)

In all situations where physical contact between staff and pupils takes place, staff must consider the following:

- the pupil's age and level of understanding
- the pupil's individual characteristics and history
- the location where the contact takes place (it should not take place in private without others present)

NB Physical contact will not be made with the participants neck, breasts, abdomen, genital area, other sensitive body parts, or to put pressure on joints. It will not become a habit between a member of staff and a particular pupil.

7. Developing a Positive Handling Plan

If a pupil is identified for whom it is felt that Restrictive Physical Intervention is likely, then a Positive Handling Plan will be devised. This Plan will help the pupil and staff avoid difficult situations through understanding the factors that influence the behaviour and identifying the early warning signs that indicate foreseeable behaviours that may be developing.

The plan will:

- involve parents/carers and pupils to ensure they are clear about what specific action the school may take, when and why
- include a risk assessment to ensure staff and others act reasonably, consider the risks, and learn from what happens
- necessitate the keeping of records in school of risk reduction options that have been examined and discounted, as well as those used
- outline a management strategy and look at how to de-escalate a conflict, stating at which point a Restrictive Physical Intervention is to be used
- identify key staff who know exactly what is expected and have had Positive Touch training. It is best that these staff are well known to the pupil

- ensure a system is in place to summon additional support
- identify training needs
- involve other agencies for advice and support (e.g. GP, Health, Community Paediatricians, Children's Services and Surrey Multi Professional Teams).

8. Guidance and training

Guidance and training is essential. We need to adopt the best possible practice and this is arranged at a number of levels including:

- awareness for governors, staff, parents and pupils
- behaviour management training for all staff and volunteers
- training is available through Surrey County Council for managing conflict in challenging situations and Restrictive Physical Intervention
- Multi-Professional meetings will provide opportunity for further advice and support.

9. Complaints

It is intended that by adopting this policy and making all stake-holders aware of its intentions and implications, the likelihood of complaints will be reduced.

Complaints about the use of force will be thoroughly, speedily and appropriately investigated.

All disputes that arise about the use of force by a member of staff will be dealt with according to Surrey's Child Protection and Safeguarding policies.

NB - Suspension will not be an automatic response if a teacher is accused of using excessive force. The governing body will always consider whether a member of staff has acted within the law when reaching a decision on whether or not to take disciplinary action. The school will provide appropriate pastoral care to any member of staff who is subject to a formal allegation following a use of force incident.

The onus is on the person making the complaint to prove that his/her allegations are true – it is not for the member of staff to show that he/she has acted reasonably.