CARE & CONTROL GUIDANCE

FOUR RIVERS FAMILY OF SCHOOLS

DIAL PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

HIGH LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL

LISBURNE SCHOOL

NORBURY HALL PRIMARY SCHOOL

OAKGROVE SCHOOL

AUTUMN 2026

Approved by the Governing Board on: _____

Headteacher: _____

Chair of Governors: _____

Date of next review: _____

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Statement of intent

This guidance is applicable to anyone within the Four Rivers Family of Schools.

The Trust recognises the right of every person to be protected from harm and, for that reason seeks to protect all pupils from any form of physical intervention which is **unnecessary**, **inappropriate**, **excessive** or **unlawful**.

Four Rivers MAT understands its responsibility for providing a healthy and safe working environment for school staff, who themselves may be put at risk whilst attempting to preserve good order and discipline.

Context

It is acknowledged that teams of staff in our schools, particularly some special schools, deal on a day to day basis with groups of children who may exhibit disturbed, distressed or distressing behaviours. Our Trust seeks therefore to assist staff in preserving good order and discipline and in promoting and maintaining an environment conducive to meeting children's needs.

The Trust also recognises that there are occasions when staff members touch children and young people in ways that are entirely appropriate. There is a need to minimise the risk to staff of false accusations of improper conduct towards a pupil and to ensure that staff members feel confident about appropriate action in very difficult circumstances.

Four Rivers recognises the constraints placed on staff in this context and has issued this guidance to help them deal with these issues upon which individual policies can be based.

Statutory framework

The Education Act 1997 (Section 4) adds Section 550A to the Education Act 1996 and establishes new powers of members of staff to restrain pupils and in certain specific instances to use reasonable force. This provision does not, however, authorise any actions which constitute corporal punishment within the meaning of Section 548 of the Education Act 1996. The School Standard and Framework Act 1998 outlaws corporal punishment for all pupils in Maintained and Independent schools and for children receiving nursery education. Further guidance can be found in *Behaviour and Discipline Guidance* February 2014 and *behaviour in Schools – Advice for Headteachers and School Staff* February 2024.

Clarification about the powers of teachers and other staff and their lawful control of children using reasonable force is given in the statutory guidance document, *Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools* April 2026. As good practice, **schools should consult this guidance in conjunction with this document**. The principle legislation to which this guide relates is:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, especially sections 93 and 93A
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010

Schools should acknowledge the difference between emergency intervention and that which can be anticipated for some children with complex learning difficulties and planned for with risk assessments and an individual handling plan if necessary.

School staff should be familiar with and refer to updates statutory guidance in place from September 2026.

For the purposes of this document, schools are regarded as care settings where care settings are referred to in statutory or guidance documents.

Duty of care

The Trust and its schools share a "duty of care" to its staff and pupils. The general obligation, *it shall be the duty of every employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health safety and welfare of all employees.* The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 specifies the employer's duty to keep its employees informed and safe.

The Children's Act 1989 Annex A Section 8 (para 3b) with its guiding principle of *the welfare of the child being paramount*, also supports the taking of *any necessary action to prevent injury or serious damage to property*. Section 3(5) states *a person who does not have parental responsibility for a particular child, but has 'care of' the child may (subject to the provision of this Act) do what is reasonable in all circumstances of the case for the purpose of safeguarding or promoting the child's welfare.*

All school staff must seek to protect the child from harm to the same extent that a parent/ carer would. The duty of care is owed to the **individual child** rather than the ordinary or reasonable child. There is a need for staff to take account of all the circumstances surrounding a child which may be influencing some behaviour.

Statutory power

All members of school staff including teachers and another other staff members the headteacher has authorised, have the power to use force. Headteachers can also decide whether to authorise, for a limited time, volunteers at the school, although this should be in exceptional circumstances only. Such individuals should be given clear instruction on when the power can be used and on the school's policy and practice.

The headteacher or delegated senior member of staff is advised to do the following:

- As part of a staff induction processes set out the school's policy on the use of force; and
- Ensure that all authorise staff know that they have the power to use force.

Headteachers are expected to take all reasonable steps to ensure staff members have the access to training and guidance in relation to the school's behaviour and discipline policy and procedures. More specialist settings will require specialist training e.g., Safer Handling approaches.

Other physical contact with pupils

Schools should not have a 'no contact' policy. Additionally, schools should not grant any requests by parents or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions. The adoption of a 'no contact' policy at a school can leave staff unable to intervene where reasonable in the circumstances to fully protect its pupils.

There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to have some physical contact with pupils which does not give rise to any question over the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions. This will depend on circumstance, but examples of occasions when physical contact is generally appropriate include:

- To give first aid.
  To guide or escort pupils, such as holding the hand of a pupil at the front/back of the line when going into assembly, when walking together around the school or on a school trip, or when helping a pupil to a space they have chosen to access to self-regulate.
- To comfort a distressed pupil.
- To congratulate or praise a pupil, for example a pat on the back or a handshake.
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument.
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching.

Circumstances justifying physical intervention

This can range from guiding/supporting a pupil to safety through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.

Schools generally use force to **control** pupils and/or **restrain** them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom.

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances:

To prevent a pupil from:

- Causing injury to themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence
- Causing significant damage to property
- Causing disorder among pupils at the school whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

This provision applies when a teacher, or other authorised person, is on the school premises and when he or she has lawful control or charge of the pupil concerned elsewhere, e.g. on a field trip or other authorised out of school activity.

Use of force as a punishment is always unlawful.

The use of force can be regarded as reasonable if:

- It is used for the minimum length of time to achieve its objective
- It is used as a last resort
- The degree of force must be the minimum necessary and in proportion to the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or the consequences it is intended to prevent (BILD Code of Practice).

In order to present a legal defence, when considering the use of restrictive physical intervention, any member of staff MUST be able to evidence that their actions were **necessary, proportionate** and **reasonable** and **in the best interests of the child**.

Is it necessary? Staff should consider whether there are other, more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation. Staff should assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risk, or whether its use would escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself. Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.

Is it proportionate? Staff should use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce the relevant risks. If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and

attempt an alternative strategy. Staff should consider the personal circumstances of the pupil such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.

Lawful methods of reasonable force can take several forms. It might involve staff:

- Physically interposing between pupils
- Blocking a pupil's path
- Holding
- Leading a pupil by the hand or arm
- Shepherding a pupil away by pacing a hand in the centre of the back, or
- In extreme circumstances using more restrictive holds.

Unreasonable levels of physical restraint

Only a court can judge, and does so retrospectively, if a reasonable level of physical force was used to restrain a child/young person. The following actions are likely to be deemed unreasonable:

- Holding pupil around the neck, or by the collar, in a way that might restrict the pupil's ability to breathe
- Slapping, punching or kicking a pupil
- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint
- Tripping a pupil
- Holding or pulling a pupil by the hair or ear
- Holding a pupil on the ground except in specialist settings in which appropriate training has been offered to authorised staff.

This list is not exhaustive, nor does it cover all possible circumstances which could arise. The application of restraint will vary according to the particular circumstances of each case. The omission of a particular kind of conduct from this list does not mean that it would be deemed reasonable. For instance, much will depend on a child's/young person's age, size, race, culture, disability or demeanour. There may also be particular difficulties when a member of staff of the opposite sex restrains a child/young person, and much will depend on the circumstances and background.

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 where 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 a 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 threat of harm has reduced, the pupil should be allowed to leave.

Any incident involving the use of seclusion must be recorded and reported in accordance with procedures outlined in *Involvement of parents and carers*.

Recording incidents

Governing boards must ensure that a procedure for recording significant incidents is in place and is followed by staff. A record should be made as soon as practicable after the incident when all parties are emotionally ready to do so.

Significant incident: any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff as described in *Other physical contact with pupils* within this document. This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

All accounts of the same incident should be taken including those of the pupil(s) involved where possible.

Best practice demonstrate that this should be a description of the behaviour and action taken. There should be no emotive or judgemental language.

Schools should keep an up to date record of such incidents. All schools within the Trust should record significant incidents using the reporting form (Appendix 1). A copy of the incident report will be completed and sent electronically to **BOTH**:

Rob Metcalfe, Director for SEND / SEMH – rob.metcalfe@four-rivers.co.uk

eas@stockport.gov.uk

Headteachers must inform their governing boards of any use of physical intervention in their termly report.

The Trust will be updated in the July Annual Review via the CEO / Director reports.

Planned responses must be put into place if a risk is recognised (Appendix 2). This plan should be revisited after any incident to assess its usefulness and to amend if necessary following the post-incident learning detailed on the recording form (Appendix 1). Any plan for physical intervention must be shared with the parents of the child in question.

Involvement of parents and carers

Schools do not require parental consent to use reasonable force on a pupil.

Governing boards must ensure that a procedure is in place for reporting each significant use of force to the parents of the pupil involved as soon as practicable after the incident, and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

Exceptions to the requirement to report are when:

- The pupil is aged 20 or over, or
- It appears to the staff member that doing so would be likely to result n serious harm to the pupil. In this instance, the staff member must report the incident to any parent(s) who it can be reported to without resulting in significant harm, or if there is no one, to the local authority within whose are the pupil is ordinarily resident.

A report of the incident made to parents should include the following details as a minimum:

- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- Brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
- Brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force
- Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable.

The requirement to report applies even if the use of restrictive intervention in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of the pupil's behaviour support plan.

Schools should communicate this information to parents in writing (Appendix 3).

Seclusion

Governing boards must ensure that a procedure is in place for recording each seclusion incident.

The same exceptions apply as to the reporting of significant incidents.

Schools should record the following details as a minimum:

- Names of pupil and staff directly involved
- Time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or a disability and their SEN status code
- Brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance

- Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- Any post-incident support, such as details of medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

Schools should communicate this information to parents in writing (Appendix 3).

Risk assessment

For the minority of pupils where extra support is needed a My Plan or Positive Handling Plan should be completed (see Appendix 2).

Risk assessment and management is the process that helps staff and others consider risk issues, to act reasonably and to learn from what happens in everyday practice. In the main, risk assessment and management involves:

- Using what is known, in the light of experience, to a make rational judgements about risk issues
- Weighing up options and taking reasonable risks
- Taking action to implement a range of approaches to support and safeguard children and others.

Challenging behaviours are often foreseeable, even though it may be difficult to predict exactly when they will occur or the degree of challenge they will pose. As a general rule schools should:

- Explore why pupils behave in a way that poses a risk
- Try to understand the factors that influence the behaviour
- Recognise the early warning signs that indicate the pupil's behaviour is beginning to emerge and develop skills to manage difficult situations competently and sensitively.

Key steps in risk management are:

- Assessing the context for risk – trying to predict the situation in which the pupil may display the dangerous behaviour
- Assessing the probability – how likely is it to occur and how likely is it injury would result to a pupil or others?
- Assessing the seriousness – trying to gauge the kind of injury that may result

Safer Handling

From September 2026 ALL school teams MUST be trained alongside our team at Four Rivers within the academic year.

Complaints

All complaints about the use of force should be thoroughly, speedily and appropriately investigated.

Where a member of staff has acted within the law – that is, they have used reasonable force to prevent injury, damage to property or disorder – this will provide a defence to any criminal prosecution or other civil or public law action.

When a complaint is made, the onus is on the person making the complaint to prove his or her allegations are true – it is not for the member of staff to show that he / she has acted reasonably. Suspension must not be an automatic response when a member of staff has been accused of using excessive force. School should refer to the *Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Teachers and Other Staff* guidance, and *Managing Allegations Policy*.

Schools must consider carefully whether the circumstances of the case warrant a person being suspended until the allegation is resolved or whether alternative arrangements are more appropriate. If a decision is taken to suspend a teacher, the school should ensure that the teacher has access to a named contact who a can offer support.

Governing boards should always consider whether a teacher has acted within the law when reaching a decision on whether or not to take disciplinary against the teacher. As employers, schools and local authorities have a duty of care towards their employees. It is important that schools provide appropriate pastoral care to any member of staff who is subject to a formal allegation following the use of force.

Appendix 1

PHYSICAL INTERVENTION REPORTING FORM - ALL SETTINGS

SCHOOL		REPORT NUMBER	
NAME OF YOUNG PERSON		D.O.B./YEAR GROUP & CLASS	
SEN STATUS		ADDITIONAL NEEDS / DISABILITY	
CHILD IN OUR CARE?			
DATE/TIME OF INCIDENT		LOCATION	

CONTEXT Events leading up to the incident. Describe de-escalation strategies used

Anxiety / Trigger Behaviours of young person and staff supportive response
Escalation Behaviours of young person and staff supportive response
Crisis Behaviours of young person, staff supportive response and reason for physical intervention.

NAMES OF OTHER STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Identify whether Safer Handling trained and date of training.

POSITIVE HANDLING STRATEGY USED: tick the appropriate box and identify whether guide or restraint

	Standing	Seated	Guide	Restraint
Wrist Guide				
Double Wrist				
Straight Arm				
Cupped Fist				
Seclusion	Where?			

DESCRIPTION OF EVENTS DURING PHYSICAL INTERVENTION including Plateau of Recovery.

POST-INCIDENT LEARNING communication and response: with the child, work together to understand, from their point of view:

What happened?

How did this make you feel?

What could you do differently next time?

Does the young person have a 'positive handling' or 'my plan' in place to prevent future incidents? Yes/No

Duration of Physical Intervention	
Date/Time Line Manager notified	
Signed (Line Manager)	
Parent/Carer Notified (date and	
Name of Injured People	
Injury	
Accident ref number	
RIDDOR form (Yes/No) & Ref No.	
LADDO informed (Yes/No)	
My Plan in place? Updated?	
Post-incident learning: name of adult/	

Signed: ……. Position: ……

Date and time of report:

Signatures of other staff members involved during incident:

Forms must be returned to:

eas@stockport.gov.uk

rob.metcalfe@four-rivers.co.uk

Appendix 2

MY **PLAN**

NAME:	DATE:	REVIEW:

My behaviour linked to the stages of distress:

What experiences could lead to unwanted behaviours?

Regulated Behaviours
When I am in the Green Zone my behaviour looks like   ***Things that keep me in the Green Zone:***

Anxiety I may feel anxious, upset, agitated and need **support** and **reassurance**.

My behaviour	**How you can help me.** **Script:**	**How can I help myself?**

Escalation I am beginning to show higher levels of distress / tension and need support, reassurance, **diversion, clear boundaries and choices**.

My behaviour:	**How you can help me.**	**How I can help myself.**

Stage 3: Crisis I may pose a risk to themselves and others. I might need a restrictive physical intervention appropriate for me.

My behaviour:	**How you can help me.**	**How I can help myself.**

Plateau of Recovery: I will need time to recover to stop me going back into crisis. I will need **support** and **monitoring**.

My behaviour:	How you can help me.	How I can help myself.

Post Crisis Depression: I may feel low and upset. I may not be ready to talk but could need **support** and **reassurance**.

My behaviour:	How you can help me.	How I can help myself.

Stage 6: Restoration I will need to repair relationships and learn from this experience.

Listen: You will listen as I tell you what happened.

Link: I will tell you how this made me feel and **link** this feeling to my actions.

Learn: I will learn a different response the next time I feel the same way.

The learning from this conversation will be used to update my plan.

De-escalation Strategies

Strategy	Try	Avoid	Rationale / Notes
Verbal advice and support			
Giving Space			
Reassurance			
Help Scripts			
Negotiation			
Limited choices			
Humour			
Remind of rewards			
Remind of consequences			
Planned ignoring			
Take-up time			
Time out (time defined)			
Supportive touch			
Hug			
Adult change of face			
Remind of successes			
Listen			

Acknowledgement			
Apologising			
Agreeing			
Removing audience			
Self-regulation space			Being in (identify space) helps me to self-regulate. Sometimes I need your help getting there

Physical techniques – must be reported unless part of de-escalation self-regulation strategy (above)

Technique	**Try**	**Avoid**	**Rationale / Notes**
Show and go			
Wrist guide			
Double wrist – standing			
Cupped Fist - standing			
Double wrist - seated			
Cupped fist - seated			
Straight arm			

Me	Signed:
My teacher	Signed:
My parent / carer	Signed:

Appendix 3

REPORT TO PARENTS AND CARERS ON THE USE OF PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

SCHOOL	
NAME OF YOUNG PERSON	
SEN STATUS:	ADDITIONAL NEEDS / DISABILITY:
DATE:	TIME:
LOCATION:	APPROXIMATE DURATION:

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF WHY THE INTERVENTION WAS ASSESSED AS NECESSARY IN THAT INSTANCE: Including staff response to de-escalate prior to the intervention.

REASON FOR INTERVENTION:

- To prevent injury to themselves or others
- To prevent committing a criminal offence
- To prevent significant damage to property
- To prevent causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

TECHNIQUE USED:

- Wrist guide
- Double wrist
- Cupped fist
- Straight arm
- Seclusion

INJURY SUSTAINED	Y / N
DETAILS OF INJURY (IF APPLICABLE)	
FIRST AID (INCLUDE REFERENCE NUMBER)	

POST-INCIDENT SUPPORT: