The Parkside School
Physical Intervention Policy

Approved by:	Carolyn Ellis – Gage Head Teacher	**Date:** September 2025
Signed:		
Next review due: **by:**	September 2026 John Habershon Deputy Head	

Norfolk Steps Training

"Step On"(De-escalation) - 'Step On' is a therapeutic approach to behaviour management, with an emphasis on consistency, on teaching internal discipline rather than imposing external discipline and on care, not punishment. It uses techniques to de-escalate a situation before a crisis occurs and, where a crisis does occur, it adopts techniques to reduce the risk of harm.

"**Step Up" – (Restrictive physical intervention)** -provides training on elements of restrictive physical intervention (restraint) and personal safety. This training can only be provided within school where staff have already completed 'Step On' training and are still within certification.

1. Introduction

At Parkside School we believe that pupils need to be safe, to know how to behave safely, and to know that the adults around them are able to manage them safely and confidently. For some pupils the use of restrictive physical intervention will be needed to ensure this safety and to prevent harm. On such occasions, the restrictive physical intervention used must be reasonable, proportionate and necessary.

All school staff need to feel that they are able to manage behaviour, and to have an understanding of what challenging or harmful behaviours might be communicating. They need to know what options are available for managing behaviour, 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 they need to be properly informed if their child is the subject of a Restrictive Physical Intervention, including the nature of the intervention, and the rationale for its use.

2. Physical Intervention

"Physical intervention" (PI) is the term used to describe contact between staff and pupils where no force is involved. There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have contact or physical intervention (PI) with children, however, it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role and in relation to the pupil's individual needs. There are occasions when staff may have cause to have physical intervention (PI) with pupils:

- To comfort a pupil in distress (so long as this is appropriate to their age)
- To gently direct a pupil
- For curricular reasons (for example in PE, Drama, etc)
- First aid and medical treatment
- In an emergency to avert danger to the pupil or pupils
- In circumstances when Restrictive Physical Intervention is warranted (See Below)

Not all children feel comfortable about certain types of physical contact; this should be recognised and staff should be sensitive to any signs that they may be uncomfortable or embarrassed. Staff should acknowledge that some pupils are more comfortable with touch than others and/or may be more comfortable with touch from some adults than others. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the child's reaction or feelings and, so far as is possible, use a level of contact and/or form of communication which is acceptable to the pupil.

It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one pupil, in one set of circumstances, maybe inappropriate in another, or with a different child. 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 duration of contact
- The location where the contact takes place (it should not take place in private without others present or being aware.)

Physical contact must never be used as a punishment, or to inflict pain. Physical contact shall not be made with the pupil's neck, breasts, abdomen, genital area, or any other sensitive body areas. Physical intervention should be in the pupil's best interest.

To reduce the risk of allegations, all staff should be aware of safer working practice and should be familiar with the guidance contained in the staff handbook, school code of conduct and staff behaviour policy.

3. Definition of "Restrictive physical intervention "

"Restrictive Physical Intervention" (RPI) is the term used to describe interventions where the use of force to control a person's behaviour is employed using bodily contact. It refers to any instance in which a member of staff has a duty to use "reasonable force" to control or restrain pupils in circumstances that meet the following criteria:

- To prevent a pupil from committing a criminal offence (this applies even if they are below the age of criminal responsibility).
- To prevent a pupil from injuring self or others.
- To prevent or stop a pupil from causing damage to property.
- To prevent emotional harm.
- To prevent significant loss of learning.
- To prevent harm from absconding.

There is no legal definition of "reasonable force". However, there are two relevant considerations:

- 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.

Legal defence for the use of force is based on evidence that the action taken was:

- Reasonable, proportionate and necessary
- In the best interest of the young person

4. When the use of restrictive physical interventions may be appropriate at Parkside School

Restrictive Physical Interventions may be used when all other strategies have failed, and therefore only as a last resort, or as part of a planned proactive intervention. All staff should focus on de-escalation and preventative strategies rather than focusing solely on reactive strategies.

Who may use restrictive physical intervention in Parkside School.

All staff who have received 'Step up' training and whose certification are up to date are authorised by the Head Teacher to use RPI, and must be aware of this policy and its implications. However, non-inclusion on this list does not mean that an adult is necessarily barred from using RPI. If the Head has lawfully placed an adult in charge of pupils then that adult will be entitled to use Restrictive Physical Intervention if it is reasonable, proportionate and necessary.

We take the view that staff should not be expected to put themselves in danger and that removing other pupils and themselves from risky situations may be the right thing to do. We value staff efforts to rectify what can be very difficult situations and in which they exercise their duty of care for the pupils.

5. Planning for the use of restrictive physical interventions in Parkside School

Staff will use the minimum force needed to restore safety and appropriate behaviour.

Elevated risks – To be Avoided

The following can result in a sense of violation, pain or restricted breathing:

- The use of clothing to restrict movement
- Holding a person lying on their chest or back (there may be occasions when this is required to prevent harm, a small number of staff are trained in specialised techniques to do so safely).
- Pushing on the neck, chest or abdomen
- Hyper flexion or basket type holds
- Extending or flexing of joints (pulling and dragging)

The following can result in significant injury:

- Forcing a pupil up or down stairs
- Dragging a pupil from a confined space
- Lifting and carrying
- Seclusion, where a person is forced to spend time alone against their will (requires a court order except in an emergency)

The principles relating to Restrictive Physical intervention are as follows:-

- Restrictive Physical Intervention is an act of care and control, not punishment.
- Restrictive Physical Intervention will only be used in circumstances when one or more of the legal criteria for its use are met.
- Staff will only use force when there are good grounds for believing that immediate action is necessary and that it is in the pupil's and/or other pupils' best interests for staff to intervene physically.
- Staff will take steps in advance to avoid the need for Restrictive Physical Intervention through dialogue and diversion unless emergency action is required.
- Staff will use the minimum force necessary to ensure safe outcomes
- Staff will be able to show that the intervention used was a reasonable response to 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, the Restrictive Physical Intervention will be relaxed to allow the pupil to regain self-control
- Escalation 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 a risk management plan, consideration will be given to approaches appropriate to each pupil's circumstance
- Procedures are in place for supporting and debriefing pupils and staff after every incident of Restrictive Physical Intervention, as it is essential to safeguard the emotional well-being of all involved at these times.

6. Developing a positive behaviour support plan

If a pupil is identified for whom it is felt that Restrictive Physical Intervention is likely to be required, then a PBSP will be in place. This Plan will help the pupil and staff to 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 include some of the following:

- Involving parents/carers and pupils (where appropriate) to ensure they are clear about what specific action the school may take, when and why.
- Techniques for managing the pupil's behaviour i.e. strategies to de-escalate and promote self-regulation.
- Stating at which point a Restrictive Physical Intervention may be required.
- Where appropriate Identifying key staff who know exactly what is expected
- Ensuring a system to summon additional support if required.
- A system for the plan being approved by a Norfolk Steps Lead Professional.

Parkside School caters for a wide range of pupil need and as a result the content of individual risk management plans can be extremely varied. Where a pupil has an individual PBSP staff should treat this document as policy. In some circumstances the contents of a PBSP may contradict information in other school policies. In this situation staff should follow the individual PBSP.

Please refer to the Appendix for an example PBSP.

7. Recording and reporting

The use of a Restrictive Physical Intervention, whether planned or unplanned (emergency) must always be recorded on CPOMS as quickly as practicable (and in any event on the same day as the incident) by the person(s) involved in the incident. The record should indicate:

- The names of the staff and pupils involved
- The reason for using a Restrictive Physical Intervention
- The type of Restrictive Physical Intervention employed
- The date and the duration of the intervention
- Whether the pupil or anyone else experienced injury or distress and, if they

did, what action was taken
- A record of who informed parents/carers and when.

8. The Nests

Parkside School is based on a small site with limited options of breakout space for pupils displaying behaviours which are challenging or harmful. As such the school have identified areas in the school called The Nest which is designed to support pupils to regulate. The aim of The Nest is to promote pupil self-regulation and must never be used as a threat or punishment. Pupils who are likely to benefit from time in The Nest should have this written in their PBSP including which strategies to use once at The Nest. The Nest can be an empty space as some pupils need it to be so but other items/equipment as detailed in PBSPs should be close at hand. Pupils should be invited to spend time in The Nest when regulated and helped to have ownership over what support is given to them when they visit The Nest.

April 2026 Addendum

This addendum is written to reflect the change in Department for Education guidance which comes into place April 2026.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools

This guidance does not change how pupils are supported physically at Parkside School. There are changes to definitions and to how incidents are recorded and reported to parents.

Definitions:

Restrictive intervention: a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This guidance uses 'restrictive interventions' as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways.

Reasonable force: a term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

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.

Other Physical contact with 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 the 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 to 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

Seclusion* - a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving - 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.

Recording and Reporting

All incidents of restrictive intervention, use of force beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff as described in 'Other physical contact with pupils,' and seclusion are recorded on CPOMS on the same day in which they occurred.

Due to their needs, many of our pupils require a high level of physical intervention throughout the school day to access their education and to support with their care. For this reason, Parkside School will not be able to record every incident of physical intervention individually. Instead we will make records for chunks of the day. All incidents of restrictive physical intervention as described in section 3 of this policy will be recorded individually. As will all incidents of seclusion.

All incidents of restrictive physical intervention, use of force and seclusion will be reported to parents/carers in writing via email at the end of the school day. This email is generated using a google form completed by the class staff.
Parents/carers will receive one such email per day which includes information about any incidents of this nature which have occurred during the day.

*Seclusion is different to Internal Suspension and removal from classroom which have the following definitions:

Removal from classrooms (Behaviour in schools guidance)
Removal is where a pupil, for serious disciplinary reasons, is required to spend a limited time out of the classroom at the instruction of a member of staff. This is to be differentiated from circumstances in which a pupil is asked to step outside of the classroom briefly for a conversation with a staff member and asked to return following this. The use of removal should allow for continuation of the pupil's education in a supervised setting.

Internal Suspensions (How suspensions in school can help tackle behaviour and boost pupil support guidance)
Internal suspension is not the same as isolation or seclusion.
Isolation usually means a child is placed alone with very limited interaction. Internal suspension, by contrast, is: supervised, structured, time-limited, focused on learning and reintegration.