



PHYSICAL INTERVENTION WITH PUPILS POLICY

RATIONALE / INTRODUCTION:

St David's N.S. recognises that there is a need, to intervene when there is an obvious risk of safety to its pupils, staff and property. The Board of Management of St David's N.S. takes seriously its duty of care to pupils, employees and visitors.

St David's N.S. is committed to ensuring that all staff and adults with responsibility for children's safety and welfare will deal professionally with all incidents involving aggressive or reckless behaviour, and only use physical intervention as a last resort. In the interest of safety for others and it will be in the context of a respectful, supportive relationship with the pupil. We will always aim to ensure minimal risk of injury to pupils and staff.

There are many times when physical contact is used in our school, such as patting a child in affirmation, administering first aid and meeting intimate care needs. However, our duty of care to others means that it may on occasion also be necessary to use physical contact using reasonable force to restrain a child who is putting themselves or another person at risk of injury. This policy governs the use of these practices. In for far as possible, all staff will engage in non-contact interventions or restraints where the safety of the pupil or others is at risk. A child who presents as dysregulated will be given personal space, as much as possible.

This policy applies to all staff who are authorised to use physical intervention.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

- to provide clear guidelines to staff, pupils and parents regarding the use of restrictive practices/physical interventions in schools, including the use of time out and withdrawal;
- to emphasise a culture within the school of prevention and reduction of the use of physical interventions/restrictive practices;
- to manage serious incidents when they occur;
- to reduce the risks associated with serious incidents such as injuries to self or others or serious damage to property.

REASONABLE FORCE:

The following definition of reasonable force applies:

- reasonable force is the minimum force necessary for the shortest period of time to prevent a pupil harming him/herself, others or property, when that damage may cause a risk to themselves or others; ●
- reasonable force will only be used as a last resort. This policy aims to provide a transparent overview of how we might use it where appropriate to manage behaviours that have the potential to be damaging to a pupil or others.

St. David's N.S. recognises that:

- each child as a unique individual and as such their right to respect and dignity is respected at all times; ●
- each child has a right to learn and work in a safe environment; ●
- each child has a right to be protected from any form of abuse or harm, assault or violence.

OUR APPROACH TO BEST PRACTICE:

The best practice regarding physical intervention outlined below should be considered alongside other relevant policies in the school, specifically those policies involving behaviour, bullying, child protection and health and safety.

In the following situations staff must judge whether or not physical intervention would be reasonable or appropriate:

- where there is significant risk to the child's safety or the safety of others;
- where a pupil is committing a criminal offence.

All staff should be aware that the use of physical intervention should only be considered in response to a clear or developing danger of serious injury.

Staff will view physical intervention or restraint of pupils as a last resort to prevent serious injury. If pupils are behaving disruptively or anti-socially, every effort will be made to manage behaviour positively to prevent a deterioration of the situation.

Staff will understand the importance of listening to and respecting children to create an environment which is generally calm and supportive especially when dealing with

pupils who may have emotional and behavioural needs which may increase their despair and aggression.

All staff will understand the importance of responding to the feelings of the child, which lie beneath the behaviour as well as to the behaviour itself. As a first response, all staff will give a pupil space and not put themselves in danger. Staff may observe a pupil from outside a classroom/sensory room, if deemed necessary, when dysregulated.

OUR PRACTICE REGARDING SPECIFIC INCIDENTS:

Staff intervening with children will seek assistance from other members of staff at as early a stage as possible since single-handed intervention increases the risks of injury to both parties and does not provide a witness.

All staff who become aware that another member of staff is intervening physically with a pupil will have a responsibility to provide a presence, and to offer support and assistance should this be required.

A pupil's behaviour may be adversely affected by the presence of an audience. Wherever possible, the audience will be removed, or if this is not possible, the pupil will be removed from the audience. The pupil and member(s) of staff will withdraw to a quiet, but not completely private, place (e.g. two members of staff should be present outside the room or a safe distance away, or a door left open so that others are aware of the situation).

Staff will be aware of the need to tell the pupil being restrained, in a calm and gentle manner that the reason for the intervention is to keep the pupil and others safe. Staff will explain that as soon as the pupil calms down, she/he will be released.

All staff are aware that we operate a back-up system to enable staff to call for help in emergencies. When deemed necessary, staff should not be alone with pupils.

Necessary staff will be provided will bags to wear around their waist to carry their emergency call button (to alert designated member of staff), walkie talkie, phone and fob for quick and efficient access and exit to and from the special class.

PHYSICAL INTERVENTION/RESTRAINT APPROACHES WHICH CAN BE REGARDED AS REASONABLE IN APPROPRIATE CIRCUMSTANCES:

The following approaches are regarded as reasonable in appropriate circumstances:

- leading a pupil by the elbow;
- shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre or upper of the back;
- when extreme danger of injury is likely to themselves or others, leading by the hand or arm;

- in the incident of a flight risk and danger/injury is imminent, holding the pupil by the arm or hand or blocking the pupil's path with your body.

HOLDS TO BE AVOIDED AT ALL TIMES

The following holds should **never** be used:

- holding a pupil around the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict a pupil's ability to breathe;
- slapping, punching or kicking a pupil;
- twisting or forcing limbs against a joint;
- tripping a pupil;
- holding a pupil by the hair or ear;
- holding a pupil face down on the ground.

RECORDING AN INCIDENT:

All incidents that result in non-routine interventions will be recorded in detail.

Contemporaneous notes (i.e. written within 24 hours of the incident's occurrence) will be made by the staff member involved in the original incident.

Similarly, contemporaneous notes will also be made by any other members of staff involved (i.e. as witnesses or additional providers of support). The notes will be signed and dated.

The notes will contain the following information:

- the name(s) and the job title(s) of the member(s) of staff who used reasonable force;
- the name(s) of the pupil(s) involved;
- when and where the incident took place;
- names of staff and pupils who witnessed the incident;
- the reason that force was necessary;
- the progress of the incident. Include details of:
 - behaviour of the pupil which led up to the incident
 - any attempts to resolve the situation
 - what was said by staff and pupil
 - the degree of force used
 - how it was applied
 - how long it was used for
- the pupil's response and the eventual outcome;
- details of any injuries suffered by either staff or pupils;
- details of any damage to property:

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- details of any medical treatment required (an accident form will be completed);
 - details of any follow-up, including contact with the parents/carers of the pupil(s) involved;
 - any other relevant details e.g. the involvement of any other agency, e.g. an Garda Siochana.
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Pupil witnesses may also be asked to provide a written account if appropriate.

These notes should be kept in the pupil's file and retained until the pupil reaches the age of 21.

Routine incidents of physical intervention, usually for pupils with identified needs as set out in the pupil's Individual Education Plan/Student Support Plan; Individual Behaviour Plan will need to be recorded as follows:

- name of child;
 - date;
 - name of member of staff who intervened;
 - name of any witnesses;
 - brief description of the reason for intervention;
 - brief description of action taken;
 - details of any follow up with parents.
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DEBRIEFING ARRANGEMENTS:

The pupil and the member of staff will be checked for any sign of injury after an incident. First aid will be administered to anyone who requires it.

The pupil will be given time to become calm while staff continue to supervise her/him. When the pupil regains complete composure, where appropriate, a member of staff will discuss the incident with the pupil and try to ascertain the reason for its occurrence. The pupil will be given an opportunity to explain things from their point of view. All necessary steps will be taken to re-establish the relationship between the pupil and the member(s) of staff involved in the incident.

In cases where it is not possible to speak to the pupil on the same day as the incident occurred, the debrief will take place as soon as possible after the pupil returns to school.

All members of staff involved will be allowed a period to debrief and recover from the incident. This may involve access to external support. A senior member of staff will provide support to the member of staff involved.

The principal will be informed at the earliest possible opportunity of any incidents where physical intervention or restraint was used. The principal will initiate the recording process if not already underway and review each incident to ensure that any necessary lessons are learned.

AUTHORISATION OF STAFF TO USE PHYSICAL INTERVENTION:

We recognise that most of the time physical intervention will be used infrequently, that is, as a last resort to maintaining a safe environment.

All teaching staff are, by the nature of their roles, authorised to use physical intervention as appropriate.

Non-teaching staff will require specific authorisation, either temporary or permanent, in particular the current SNAs in the school. This authorisation can only be given by the principal or someone deputising for the principal when absent.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR INFORMING PARENTS:

Parents will be informed of the school's policy regarding physical intervention in the following ways:

- at the outset of the introduction of this policy, all parents/carers will be informed about the policy;
- parents will be informed after a non-routine incident where physical intervention is used with their child.

The Board of Management will be informed of the number of physical interventions if any at the next the next meeting of the board.

TIMEFRAME FOR REVIEW:

This policy will be reviewed and updated in three years or sooner, if necessary.

RATIFICATION:

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 11/6/24

Signed:  Date: 11/6/24
Chairperson

Signed:  Date: 11/6/24
Principal