D1 8.5.26 St John and St Nicolas Schools Federation
Physical Restraint Policy

At St John and St Nicolas Schools Federation, our vision is 'For the good of all – through curiosity, creativity and love.' This vision inspires everything that the federation does.
It applies equally to all the federation's policies with the intention that our policies impact as fairly and positively as possible to meet the needs of all members of our schools' community.

This policy has been created in response to the government's 'Restrictive Interventions, Including Use of Reasonable Force in Schools' guidance, which came into force in April 2026. For further reference beyond this policy, please refer to this guidance.

In our schools, all members of staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances to prevent or stop a child from:

- Causing injury to themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence
- Damaging property
- Causing disorder among pupils at the school

It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment. Pupils should not be restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation for example, by covering the mouth and/or nose, or applying pressure to the neck region or abdomen. The use of force can be dangerous, particularly where it occurs on the ground. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their holds or re-position to a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.

1: Acceptable Contact

In our schools, we accept that there are circumstances where 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 or other restrictive interventions. This will depend on the circumstances but examples of when physical contact is appropriate include:

- To give first aid
- To guide or escort pupils, such as holding the hand of a pupil when walking around the school or on a school trip or to help them to a space that 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 or to demonstrate exercises or techniques in P.E. lessons.

When assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in a given situation, the member of staff should use their judgement and have regard to:

- The federation's safeguarding policy
- The applicable circumstances – such as whether any other adults are present
- The individual pupil's age
- Any other material factors, such as SEND or other vulnerabilities

2: Physical Intervention in our Federation

There will be times when school staff may need to use restrictive interventions, and they should know that this option may be available to them. The decision on whether it is reasonable to use a restrictive intervention depends on the individual circumstances of each situation. To make this assessment, the member of staff should consider the following:

Is it necessary ?

- Staff should consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation – this might include de-escalation techniques through talking or body language, walking away from the situation or informing a more senior member of staff.
- Staff should assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks or whether it might escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself.
- Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members

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.

Have you considered the pupil's welfare ?

- Staff should consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken.
- Staff should seek to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity.
- Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why and explain what the pupil needs to do.
- Staff should seek to understand how the pupils is feeling and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

In our federation, there are a number of staff trained in the use of Team Teach, which allows physical intervention to be carried out safely. Where possible, in any situation, one of these staff members should be sought out before any restrictive intervention takes place.

Any incident that involves restrictive intervention should be recorded on CPOMS and evaluated after. The school should hold a follow-up conversation with the child and staff member to facilitate reflection, learning and to support pupils and staff wellbeing.