

Tanfield Lea Community Primary School

Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) Policy



Opening Doors, Enriching Lives

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Introduction

This policy statement is intended as a supporting guide to the school's Behaviour Policy and has been updated to comply with the Department for Education (DfE) document: *Restrictive Interventions including Use of Reasonable Force, in Schools – Guidance for Schools in England (April 2026)*.

95% of crisis situations can be resolved through calm, controlled, dignified and skilled de-escalation strategies.

Background

Restrictive Physical Intervention/Restraint (RPI) is the positive application of force with the intent of overpowering the child in order to:

- Restrict movement.
- Restrict mobility.
- Disengage from dangerous or harmful physical contact.

The proper use of physical control requires judgement, skills and knowledge of non-harmful methods of control.

As a general rule nobody has the right to touch, move, hold or contain another person. However, people with a duty of care operate in exceptional circumstances where it is sometimes necessary to act outside this norm. Whenever they do so they should be clear about why it is necessary. The best legal defence would be to show that any actions were in the child's best interest and that they were reasonable and proportionate, along with being for the least amount of time and using the least amount of force.

Schools can use reasonable force to:

- Remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so.
- Prevent a child behaving in a way that disrupts a school event, school trip or visit.
- Prevent a child leaving the classroom where allowing the child to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others.
- Prevent a child from attacking a member of staff or another child, or to stop a fight in the playground.
- Restrain a child at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.
- Any other incident where a child's actions put their safety, or the safety of others, at risk.

Who can use Reasonable Force?

All members of school 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; or
- causing disorder among children at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Use of Reasonable Force to Search a Child

Head Teachers, and staff they authorise, have a statutory power to search a child or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the child may have a prohibited item. A member of staff can use such force as is reasonable to search for legally prohibited items, but not to search for items banned under the school rules only. Staff should refer to the [Searching, Screening and Confiscation Guidance](#) document for detailed advice on searching a child.

Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions should be adequately trained in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies.

On occasions when de-escalation and conflict resolution techniques have failed, the use of RPI may be required to safely and appropriately manage a situation. The concept of RPI involves ensuring that a child with a high level of personal stress, a dangerous lack of self-control and a serious desire to challenge and threaten are diverted from the following;

- Harming themselves or others.
- Seriously damaging property.
- Disruptive behaviour prejudicial to the safe and secure learning environment of the school.
- Or are protected from the likelihood of them doing so.

When no one is in control, the desire to challenge and threaten often escalates. A proactive, orderly, caring and learning environment is impossible to achieve and sustain when children or adults believe they are not safe.

RPI includes the use of Physical Presence; Restriction of Access; Restriction of Exit; Physical Diversion; Increased Staffing; High Level Supervision; RPI and the necessary Prevention from Leaving the Premises without Permission, so that dangerous and/or violent behaviour is controlled and prevented from spreading to others. (All in line and accordance with the current Institute of Conflict Management (ICM) code of practice).

The ICM Code of Practice

The ICM code of practice stresses that:

- RPI should only be used in the best interests of the service user.
- The minimum force for the shortest time.
- Prevent injury, pain and distress.
- Maintain dignity.
- Reasonable and proportionate.
- All actions should be necessary.

RPI must only be used when it is required to prevent a child:

- From self-harming.
- Injury to other children, staff or teachers.
- Damaging property.
- Prevent a child leaving the premises, where allowing the child to leave would risk their safety.
- In school settings, any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline within the school, or among any of its children.

Staff will need to take the following factors into consideration:

- The behaviour of the child.
- The known intention of the child.
- Their known wishes, feelings and emotional state.
- The child's personal history.
- The influence of other children, family and friends.
- Any events that may be causing the child anxiety.
- Knowledge of the child.
- The time of day.
- The antecedents to the situation.

In considering these factors particular attention needs to be given to the age, understanding and maturity of the child. As a child matures, he/she becomes more able to make considered decisions. However, competency is not only determined by age and maturity. The possible consequences of behaviour should be a significant factor in decision-making.

A decision, which involves an assessment of the risk of potential harm, must not be left to a child to make alone. It will be a matter for negotiation, or solely the responsibility of the member of staff. The more danger that can be foreseen in a particular situation, the less likely it will be that the child is competent to make a decision.

Where a child is proposing to do something where there is clear potential for him/her injuring themselves, others, or seriously damaging property, then staff can properly use RPI to prevent him/her from doing so.

Dialogue

It is essential that wherever possible the use of RPI should be avoided in favour of lower-level de-escalation, through verbal persuasion and dissuasion, and positive handling prompts.

Persuasion and dissuasion is where the staff focus the discussion with children with the aim of persuading or dissuading them from an intended course of action. It is in effect focussed guidance. Only when dialogue is clearly not producing a satisfactory resolution and a situation continues to be unsafe or to deteriorate then staff should consider the use of RPI.

Physical Presence

A staff member's physical presence is often all that is necessary to communicate authority, and to re-establish safety and security. Presence by implication of one's authority may restrict child's movement for a brief period, but is limited to:

- Standing close by, or in front of a child.
- Standing momentarily or temporarily in the way of a child.

Presence should become neither oppressive, or of excessive duration. It is likely to be most effective if complemented by a range of non-verbal communication signals, and Persuasion or Dissuasion. Physical presence must be:

- Considered appropriate in the context of a particular situation or incident.
- Used only in the context of engaging the child in discussion about the significance, relevance and consequences of his/her behaviour.
- Ended if it is met with resistance, when a decision will need to be made whether or not another form of intervention is appropriate.

Restriction of Access/Exit (Seclusion and Non-Force Related Restraint)

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a child confined to a place away from others, and preventing them from leaving either by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave.

In the ordinary course of maintaining a supportive and stable educational experience, staff may limit child's liberty by requiring them not to do things that they may prefer to do, including restricting them within a building. However, if the child complies with the reasonable request, restriction of liberty is not an issue.

There may be occasions however, when a child has lost self-control and is intent on serious self-damage, inflicting injury on others, damage to property, or is considered potentially

likely to do so, that it would be appropriate to prevent access to dangerous environments by locking doors to them. Restricting access under such circumstances is considered appropriate staff action.

Occasionally in respect of the types of behaviour described previously, it may be necessary to prevent a distressed child from exiting a room by blocking the doorway by Physical Presence. This type of control is appropriate and permissible provided that:

- The duration of the intervention is only brief, and the child is engaged in conversation aimed at de-escalating the situation.
- The action is a response to a particular situation and not regular practice.
- If the child physically resists, a considered decision is made in respect of justification for, and use of, alternative forms of intervention.

Physical Diversion

Physical Diversion differs from RPI in the degree of 'force' used. Physical Diversion may be for example, holding a hand, placing a hand on the forearm or putting an arm around the shoulder. Physical Diversion is a means of deflecting a child from destructive and/or disruptive behaviour. It involves little force but serves to reinforce staff attempts to 'reason'. It is persuasive rather than coercive. It is important that:

- It should guide, comfort and reassure.
- If possible, the intervening member of staff should already have an established relationship with the child.
- Physical Diversion should not arouse sexual expectations or feelings (if it does, holding should cease).
- It should be ended if it is met with resistance. When a further decision will need to be made whether or not another form of intervention is appropriate.

Increased Staffing Levels

Whilst not a true RPI technique the temporary physical presence of Increased Staffing Levels when a particular class are experiencing severe difficulties in functioning, because of the behaviour of a particular child/children, it may be a means of managing the situation. A temporary increase of staffing levels is particularly useful because it does not label individual children.

Time Away

If a child is unsettled, and it is felt that they would benefit from being away from a situation, then they might take 'Time away'. Time away can either be requested by a child or directed by staff. The objective should be to give a child the opportunity to regain their composure, without the pressure associated with being in a formal location or being near staff or other children. Time away is an important tool in encouraging and supporting children to manage their own behaviour prior to reaching a crisis point.

Removal of a child to the support room (Rainbow room, Sunshine room or quiet room) is one strategy used within the range of restrictive physical interventions. The support rooms are specifically designated and designed areas. The use of the support rooms reflects the principles underpinning the de-escalation, therapeutic and counselling techniques within the Team Teach ethos and code of practice. Information regarding Team Teach can be found at the end of this policy.

If a child is unsettled, and continues to be disruptive to the safe and secure learning environment of other children it may be considered by staff to separate a child from their peers and supervise him/her by a member or members of staff with the purpose of providing

him/her with continuous focused supervision and support. Children isolated from their peers and supervised by staff must not be in locked rooms.

To summarise:

RPI is the positive use of minimum force to divert a child from harming himself/herself or others, seriously damaging property, disrupting the safety and security of the school's learning environment, or to protect a child from the likelihood of their doing so.

RPI at Tanfield Lea Community Primary must only be used to prevent:

- Self-harming.
- Injury to other children, school users, staff or teachers.
- Damage to property.
- An offence being committed.
- In school settings, any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline within the school or among any of its children.

And as a means of preventing a child leaving if:

- The child is so acutely and seriously troubled that it is clear he/she is in immediate danger of inflicting serious self-harm, serious harm to others, or seriously damaging property.
- Lesser interventions have either not been understood or successful and the child would upon absconding be potentially in physical or moral danger.
- The child is socially immature and vulnerable, consequently potentially at physical and moral risk.
- Its use is intended to return a child to a less dangerous situation.
- The child is very likely to interrupt the safe and secure learning environment of the school.
- It is described as a course of permitted action in the child's Behaviour Support Plan.

Normally lesser forms of intervention should have been used first and all de-escalation techniques exhausted. The onus is upon the member of staff to decide when this position has been reached.

RPI is used only:

- when there is NO OTHER WAY; and
- where any other course of action would be likely to fail.

RPI must not be used:

- To punish.
- To gain a child's compliance with staff instruction (unless the instruction is to cease from a course of behaviour leading to injury, damage or serious disruption).
- To cause or threaten hurt/pain.
- Oppress, threaten, intimidate and bully.

There are occasions when to safeguard a child's dignity or safety it would be in his/her interests to be moved to a less public place or safer environment. This may also be the case in establishing or maintaining a safe and settled learning environment or to prevent/lessen disruption to the environment. However, the movement of non-co-operative children can be problematic and needs careful consideration. Staff will need to assess the necessity of such an action against the potential risks involved and take into consideration all potential dangers.

When a child co-operates with movement it is usually indicative of their desire to regain self-control.

Staff using RPI must always adhere to the following principles:

- Follow the 'Team Teach' training given. See below for further details.
- De-escalation and conflict resolution techniques must have been exhausted.
- Always warn the child quietly, yet clearly and firmly that you are likely to take RPI BEFORE taking action.
- NEVER act out of temper. If you are losing control the professional approach is to call another member of staff to replace your involvement at this time.
- The RPI techniques should provide a gradual, graded system of response commensurate with the situation task and individual involved. Consideration should be made to any risk involved in any particular situations. Techniques used should allow for phasing up and down as dictated by the circumstances at that time.
- Whenever possible, more than one member of staff should be present or involved. This prompts teamwork requires less effort and is therefore likely to minimise the possibility of damage or injury. It also prevents particular staff becoming associated with physical methods of control.
- It is good practice, but not absolutely necessary, where a male member of staff is involved in controlling a child of the opposite sex, that a female member of staff should be present. Best interests of the child and health and safety issues are the main drivers for staff actions in this area. The least intrusive method of control should be employed
- **IN EVERY CASE, no more than the reasonable amount of force, with the maximum amount of care for the minimum amount of time should be used to keep safe** nor more time taken, than is necessary to effectively resolve the situation.
- The child should repeatedly be offered the opportunity of exercising his own self-control. Physical management should cease as SOON AS POSSIBLE. The skilled use of non-verbal, intonation and verbal strategies aid de-escalation.
- Whilst it may be necessary for staff to be given support in physically controlling children, staff should be aware that creating an audience can often escalate the situation.
- As soon as possible after the incident, when the child is calm and ready, he/she should be given the opportunity to talk through the incident.
- **All incidents concerning RPI must be recorded on a Major Incident Record Form.** The report should consider the circumstances and justification for using RPI.
- Staff involved should be afforded supportive discussion if required as soon as possible.

Procedure for RPI

Only staff that have undertaken training programmes in 'Team Teach' methods of RPI and have valid confirmation of their approval to do so from the Head Teacher and the Team Teach instructor are permitted to physically control children using Team Teach techniques. Only those techniques of the 'Team Teach' approach can be employed (see the Team Teach Instruction Manual or ask a Team Teach instructor for clarification).

The following procedure for RPI must always be followed:

- Try to give the child clear warning ie "Look you're giving me no other option..." Still try to offer an alternative escape route from the situation by encouraging the child to calm down and talk things through. (This offer must stand all the way through the incident and must be repeated to the child).
- The vast majority of crisis situations can be resolved through appropriately calm, controlled, dignified and skilled intervention.
- Once physical intervention is necessary then it is important that it happens quickly, smoothly, confidently and successfully providing the maximum amount of care, control and therapeutic support.

The choices for RPI are:

- Controlling the child in a standing position.
- Controlling the child in a seated position (chair or beanbag).

It is only possible to decide which of these options to take as one's experience, expertise and knowledge of the individual child grows, although inevitably they represent a gradual and graded increase in the extent of control used.

The paramount decision should be based on 'Safety' for all concerned.**Phone Calls / Letters Home (Notification of RPI)**

Parents/Carers should be contacted by phone after any form of RPI in which a member of staff uses force on a child. Each such incident should be reported to the parent/carer as soon as practicable after the incident. If it is likely that reporting an incident to a parent/carer will result in significant harm to the child, significant incidents should be reported to the local authority.

The Secretary of State's view is that, significant harm is where a child is chastised inappropriately and/or significantly. The person who makes the telephone call need not be the person who compiled the MIR report. In the event of parents not being able to be contacted by phone regarding RPI, a letter should be sent home notifying them accordingly of the incident. Tanfield Lea Community Primary School maintains good telephone contact with the majority of parents/carers, however there are times when behaviour may become a concern and it is appropriate to formally notify parents/carers in writing. Such occasions would include property damage, regular absenting, bullying and increased levels of violence to staff or peers. The letters serve a dual purpose of notifying parents/carers and eliciting their support.

School should then have a conversation with parents. This might discuss any triggers, behaviour support plans, de-escalation techniques and their effectiveness and what might be done differently in future.

School will inform parents even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a child's behaviour support plan.

If RPI is judged by the Head Teacher to have been used with a child too frequently, a Case Discussion may be called. This meeting should, whenever possible, involve the child, parents/carer, Head Teacher, and any other involved parties.

The aim of the minuted meeting is to plan strategies to:

- Safeguard and promote the child's welfare.
- Appropriately meet the child's needs.
- Manage his/her behaviour.
- Minimise the need for external controls.

The meeting must also consider:

- The wishes and feelings of the child and his/her parents/carers.
- The appropriateness of Tanfield Lea Community Primary School as a placement for the child.
- The circumstances under which future meetings should be convened with the same agenda.
- The need to establish an Individual Behaviour Support Plan or amend an existing one.

Additionally, information regarding RPI used with a child will frequently be discussed amongst trained staff. This information will be used to positively amend practice and intervention strategies, risk assessments etc.

Monitoring

The Leadership Team should monitor the use of RPI by examining:

- The frequency of their use.
- The justification of their use.
- Their nature.
- Their users.
- The views of the child concerning them.

He/she must ensure that:

- The need to use RPI are minimised.
- RPI used only in the appropriate circumstances.
- Only the appropriate RPIs are used in particular situations.

It is the responsibility of the Leadership Team to bring to the attention of the Head Teacher at an early stage any concerns about the frequency or nature of RPI used with any particular children and hopefully before any crisis point is reached.

It is the responsibility of any member of the school's staff team to alert a member of the Leadership Team of any concerns they have regarding any individual child in their care, where frequent RPI is evident and any malpractice on a member of staff's behalf.

Record Keeping

Any individual child records are kept for a period of 25 years after the date of birth of the child or are passed to the next school and a receipt obtained. This retention period is the minimum period that any child file should be kept.

In addition to the above, Team Teach strongly recommends that all services should keep records/copies of incidents of restraint, for a minimum period of 25 years from the date of the incident.

The behaviour of some individuals presents a hazard to themselves and others. In settings which cater for individuals who exhibit hazardous behaviours, records serve a number of purposes:

- They can be an invaluable aid to risk assessment and risk reduction by communicating information about known hazards.
- They can provide evidence of both poor and preferred practice to help managers target training.
- They can direct managers towards improving the quality of the guidance they provide for staff.
- They can expose malpractice and protect staff against false allegations.
- Employers who fail to establish effective recording and reporting systems to protect children, young people, vulnerable adults and staff are in breach of their statutory duties under Health and Safety legislation.

All Parents/Carers are entitled to information on the behavioural management and positive handling techniques which staff employ in last resort situations. There is a summary contained within the Behaviour Policy. This RPI policy is available on the school's website.

If a support plan or risk assessment identifies the need for RPI, the Head Teacher will ask parents/carers to sign a Home School Agreement, this being the school's RPI Consent Form. By signing the form, the parent/carer will be indicating their agreement with the school's Behaviour Policy which is expected to set out the circumstances in which force might be used on a child. It should be made clear to the parent/carer that, in signing the agreement they are acknowledging the school's power to use reasonable force on their child in the circumstances described in the policy.

Tanfield Lea Community Primary School Governing Body are entitled to:

- Attend any behaviour management and/or Team Teach training.
- A copy of all relevant policies/guidelines and documents.
- Any relevant information and data, which allows them to monitor and make decisions about school improvement issues.

It is good practice for the Governing Body to monitor incidents where RPI or Seclusion has been used. Head Teachers have an important role in reporting such incidents to them. The Head Teacher will report such incidents through the Head Teacher report to governors.

Governing bodies must ensure that a procedure is in place for recording each significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a child, and reporting each such incident to each parent/carer of the child as soon as practicable after the incident.

If it is likely that reporting an incident to a parent/carer will result in significant harm to the child, significant incidents should be reported to the local authority, after first seeking advice from a member of the leadership team.

Team Teach

Team Teach forms the training programme for RPI used at Tanfield Lea Community Primary School.

Team Teach is a whole setting, holistic behaviour management response that aims to use de-escalation and behaviour strategies as a standard response to challenging behaviour. However, this is incorporated with restrictive positive handling techniques that are graded and gradual (up or down) as the situation requires.

Restrictive Positive Handling techniques are never used in isolation.

The Team-Teach approach will also:

- Reinforce policy and practice, inform of current legislation, legal considerations and circular guidelines concerning restrictive physical interventions (RPIs).
- Reinforce the essential verbal and non-verbal skills required in a crisis situation.
- Make staff groups aware of necessary interventions appropriate to the level of behaviour reached by the child.
- Following training, provide designated staff with knowledge, understanding and physical skills required for their personal safety, and the management of children in their care.
- Offer post-incident structure to both the child and member of staff.

Team Teach Aim

To provide an accredited training framework designed to reduce risk and through working together safeguard people and services.

Team Teach Objectives

- To develop shared values which promote the attitude, skill and knowledge needed to implement Team Teach in the workplace.
- To develop positive handling skills in behaviour management, including: verbal and non-verbal communication, diversion, de-escalation and safe, effective, humane physical interventions.
- To develop skills in positive listening and learning.

The basic principles of Team Teach are:

- Staff numbers – emphasis on at least two members of staff when a situation occurs. This is protection for both staff and the child concerned.
- 95% of crisis situations can be resolved through calm, controlled, dignified and skilled de-escalation strategies.
- Minimum force and time – it is important not to react emotionally but professionally and composed.
- Last resort (where possible) – all other behaviour management strategies to be tried and used first.
- Restrictive physical intervention techniques that provide a gradual, graded system of response – commensurate with the situation, task and individuals involved.
- Techniques allow for verbal communication – utilising positive relationships.
- Techniques that do not rely on pain or “locks” for control.
- Staff safety and protection issues addressed – it is important for staff to have a range of break-away and release techniques in a serious situation where health and safety are at risk.
- Emphasis on staff awareness and communication skills – verbal and non-verbal used to de-escalate a possible crisis situation.

- Following restraint there should be both a supportive and reflective structure for both staff and child.
- All incidents involving a child being physically managed should be reported, recorded, monitored and evaluated.

Team-Teach is governed by the Institute of Conflict Management (ICM) Code of Practice.

Team Teach Protocols

The Team Teach instruction is comprehensive and staff that are unsure about approaches, de-escalation, protocols, techniques or holds should seek clarification from one of the instructors. The following is a brief outline of some of the main principles:

- Designated staff should always be aware of their own safety. Only in exceptional circumstances should staff use RPIs without another member of staff being present to support.
- It is always easier if one member of staff takes the lead and directs events.
- With two staff present, take one arm each. Always be aware of kicks, punches, knees, head butts, spitting, bites etc.
- Take hold at the lower forearm/wrist.
- Keep close contact with the child, with 'no daylight' between you.
- Maintain only the pressure that is required to keep safe.
- Communicate with each other and the child.
- If sitting in an upright chair keep well to the side and slightly behind the child.
- Once the situation is under control, safe and secure, counselling of the child should begin. Use ploys like – “Look this did not need to happen!”
- It is not unusual to meet a continuous stream of abuse, obscenities etc. Ignore these, try to be calm, look beyond the behaviour, and talk deliberately and in a pacifying tone. Use phrases like – “Ok If you want to talk, I'll listen!” and - “We can get out of this situation once you have told me and shown me you are calm!”
- Offer positive feedback as soon as possible - “Good that's better. You're much calmer now!”
- With a particularly reserved child it may be possible to progress the 'letting go' process by distraction methods eg talking to other involved colleagues about absolutely anything appropriate, or positive talk about the child, or appropriate humour. Eg - “You know Ben's had an excellent week so far !” Or - “You know I would have thought Ben would have been able to get himself out of this situation by now. He's normally quite sensible!” Or - “Did you see the match last night ?”
- Once the situation begins to calm down, significant decreases in the grades of RPI should commence. However, these should be on staff terms and not when demanded by the child. If he/she asks sensibly, calmly and politely staff must adhere to the request, however exercise caution.
- The overall aim is to (when the child is calm and ready to talk) discuss what provoked the whole episode, getting the child to examine the problem and its consequences. Staff need the child to realise that there was a more acceptable and appropriate way of dealing with the situation.
- The child should be asked if they are hurt and/or if they need medical treatment.
- The event should be discussed with all involved staff, so that positive feedback is given, and the potential for improved approach, teamwork and skills is achieved.
- A Major Incident Report Form must be written with all involved staff and the child given the opportunity to record their own feelings and opinions.

Entitlements and Requirements

Designated teaching and support staff are entitled as part of their annual professional development and training to:

- A minimum of 6 hours re-accreditation Team Teach training within a two-year period of completing a basic training course or previous refresher course.
- Notification of any updates and changes in the management of challenging behaviour and handling techniques, and changes in current legislation/legal considerations.
- Review/assess and express their own perceived areas of additional training requirements through risk assessment and situations arising in their own school/ class environment.
- An individual copy of the Team Teach policy and positive handling guideline booklet made available for them, and evidence of it being read and understood.
- The availability of being able to approach a Team Teach instructor and be reminded/demonstrated on any particular Team Teach recognised/approved positive handling technique.
- To express their views on any particular handling technique's efficiency or inadequacy on any particular child (which must then be recorded by that particular member of staff in that child's individual support plan/risk assessment).

Seclusion Reporting Form

Please complete this form as soon as possible (ideally on the same day).

Name of staff member completing this form	
Date of Seclusion	
Time of Seclusion	
Location of Seclusion	
Approximate Duration of Intervention	
Name/s of child/ren directly involved	
Name/s of staff directly involved	
Any relevant needs or circumstances, including whether the child has an identified special educational need	
Brief account of any de-escalation techniques used	
Brief account of why the intervention was assessed to be necessary in that instance	
Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable	
Signed (please also print name)	
Dated	