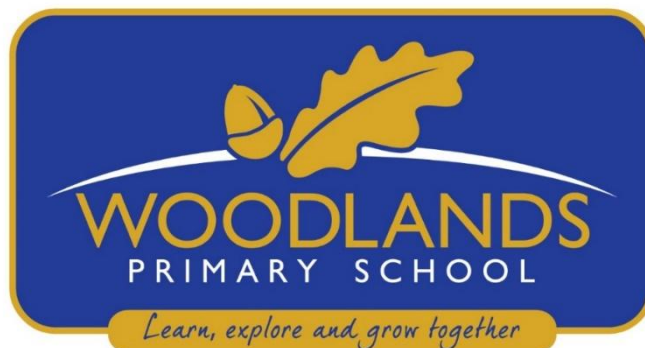


Woodlands Primary School

Physical Contact Policy



Written by	Amy Adams
Ratified by Governors	July 2026
Date for Review	"Updated May 2026 to reflect DfE Restrictive Interventions Guidance and statutory Recording & Reporting Regulations." July 2029
Signed – Chair of Governors	
Signed – Headteacher	
Is this an internal or external policy?	External
Is this based on a model policy?	No

This policy has been impact assessed by Vicki Lonie in order to ensure that it does not have an adverse effect on race, gender or disability equality

1. Policy Statement

We believe that children's experience of touch should be positive and that educating them will allow them to safeguard themselves now and in their future lives.

Our policy on touch reflects our shared understanding that touch is essential to child development and has been developed with due consideration of neuro-biological research and child development studies that identify safe touch as positively contributing to brain development, mental health and the development of social skills.

At Woodlands Primary School, we have adopted an informed, evidence-based decision to allow safe touch as a developmentally appropriate intervention that will aid healthy growth and learning.

We, therefore, aim to ensure that all staff and people whom the headteacher has temporarily put in charge of pupils (including unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying pupils on a school-organised visit) know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. Staff need to demonstrate a clear understanding of the difference and feel confident to teach accordingly. Equally, when a child is in deep distress, staff are trained to know when and how sufficient connection and emotional support can be provided without touching. Through this proactive approach, we intend that young people are empowered to identify, communicate about and respond to both appropriate and inappropriate touch.

2. Aim of the Policy

- To ensure that all learners are treated fairly and shown respect
- To help learners take control over their behaviour and be responsible for the consequences of it
- To build a community which values kindness, care, good humour, good temper and empathy for others
- To promote community cohesion through improved relationships

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Behaviour policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- SEND/Inclusion policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-bullying policy

It has been written with reference to the following legislation:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education Sept 2023
- The DfE - Use of Reasonable Force – Advice for Head teachers, Staff and Governing Bodies' Feb 2024
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (UNCRC)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education July 2015
- DfE Restrictive Interventions Guidance and statutory Recording & Reporting Regulations May 2026

3. Purpose of the policy

- To ensure we are able to carry out our duty of care towards all of our children and place the best interests of the child as our paramount consideration
- To promote the well-being of children in the knowledge that nurturing touch is a basic need and a powerful tool to help children develop into healthy, well-balanced human beings
- To promote an ethos of respect for self and others

What does the research tell us about touch and development?

- Biologically, touch is the first sense to develop and the last to leave us. By the 7th week of pregnancy, a baby reacts to touch
- Feel-good chemicals are released in the brain through caring interactions
- The body and brain will stop growing if there is a lack of touch in infancy
- Families and cultures that express warm physical affection have fewer issues with anger and aggression
- Many children often learn best through touch and movement

For many of our young people, there are times when they are unable to regulate their own emotions and may act out their emotions physically. At these times, use of reasonable force may be necessary to calm a young person to keep them and others safe. The staff at Woodlands Primary School are trained in positive handling in order to minimise risk and to ensure staff are empowered to act in the best interests of the child at all times. (see Behaviour Policy and later in this policy)

Instances of positive handling can be traumatic for both the young person and staff involved and so we recognise the importance of effective debriefing. We also know that there may be occasions where young people have actively sought physical containment in the only way they know how. Research shows that physical proximity can calm a child. Sometimes it really helps to hold a distressed child as long as the adult remains calm and in control. Being next to a calm body will bring an over-aroused body and brain systems back into balance and release natural, calming hormones. (Margot Sunderland)

A restrictive intervention is any action that limits a pupil's movement, liberty or freedom to act. This includes physical restraint, non-physical restriction, and seclusion. These interventions must only be used when necessary, proportionate and for the shortest time possible, in order to prevent harm.

The impact of positive touch:

Access to physical proximity and positive touch has been shown to:

- improve concentration
- improve cooperation
- increase a stronger sense of self and higher self-esteem/confidence
- reduce aggressive behaviour
- encourage a calmer classroom environment
- encourage empathy and respect for their peers
- enable the children to recognize difference between good and bad touch
- encourage a more relaxed and focused feeling in the school
- discover differences between people
- encourage and develop the imagination
- improve communication

4. Children's rights and appropriate touch

All children have the same rights. These rights are listed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A recurrent theme throughout is that of respect. Except during positive handling, all physical contact should be with the young person's consent.

Our procedures adhere to the belief that every individual needs to appreciate the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch. There are a number of factors that can affect how we interpret 'appropriate' touch. Social rules that say what behaviour is appropriate around other people can be difficult for some children to pick up. Many of us learned these social rules by observation but some children will not be able to do this and they will need to be explicitly taught these skills. 'Appropriateness' is dependent on relationships, situations, past experiences and gender as well as specific special needs including sensory sensitivity, and attachment.

In Western culture, it is generally accepted that appropriate places to touch are the shoulders, arms and back. However, we need to be aware that there are considerable cultural differences that may be applicable to both young people and staff in the school. Assumptions should not be made about this. We also know that touch zones vary according to the gender of both parties. Again, staff need to show an awareness of this in their interactions with the young people in their care.

Some forms of touch are generally agreed as tools we use intentionally and strategically to enhance a sense of connection with a young person to soothe, greet, relax, quiet down or reassure them. Following are examples of different types of touch:

1. **Greeting and departure gestures:** handshakes, greeting or departing embraces. These gestures vary from culture to culture.
2. **Conversational markers** such as a light touch on the arm, hand, back or shoulder to enhance other forms of communication.
3. **Consolation touch:** providing a comforting hug, holding hands or shoulders in response to grief, sorrow, distress, anguish, agony, sadness or upset.
4. **Reassuring touch:** a pat on the back or shoulders encourages and reassures
5. **Grounding or reorienting touch:** touching the hand or arm to help reduce anxiety or dissociation by helping a young person be aware of his or her physical body.
6. **Task-oriented touch:** offering a hand to help someone stand up or stop the young person from falling.
7. **Instructional or modelling touch** such as demonstrating how to give a firm handshake or how to respond to unwanted touch.
8. **Celebratory or congratulatory touch:** 'high-fives', a pat on the back or a congratulatory hug for the young person who has succeeded with a goal or good effort toward a goal.
9. **Inadvertent touch:** This refers to touch that is unintentional or involuntary.

At Woodlands Primary School, by 'appropriate touch' we mean touch that is not invasive, hostile, punishing, humiliating or could possibly be considered as eroticising or flirtatious. Naturally, staff are also fully aware of touch that is invasive or which could be confusing, traumatising, or experienced as eroticising in anyway whatsoever. Should any such touch be used, it would be deemed as the most serious breach of the Code of Conduct warranting the highest level of disciplinary action. Our Safeguarding Policy outlines the necessity to ensure all young people are safe in their bodies and their feelings and how the staff work together to ensure this is the case. Where staff are acting in the best interests of the young person, they will be supported by the school.

All physical contact, including restrictive interventions, must respect the dignity, rights and best interests of the child. Except in situations where safety is at risk, contact should always be with the child's consent.

5. Safeguarding

Staff should always consider and abide by the Staff Code of Conduct. Any member of staff who is concerned about another member of staff's practice should discuss their concerns with headteacher, or chair of governors in the case of concerns about the headteacher.

Staff must be aware that the inappropriate or excessive use of restrictive interventions may constitute a safeguarding concern. All concerns must be reported in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

6. Positive Handling and Restrictive Interventions

At times, some pupils become dysregulated. They can become a danger to themselves or others, or have a negative impact on the learning of others. This may require adults to support children with positive handling.

Staff must always prioritise:

- De-escalation strategies
- Emotional regulation support
- Early intervention
- Environmental adaptations

Restrictive interventions must only be used where these approaches have been unsuccessful or are not possible in the circumstances.

What is reasonable force?

Reasonable force is a form of restrictive intervention and must always be:

- Necessary
- Proportionate
- Used for the shortest possible time

It must **never be used as a punishment**

- The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.

- Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a pupil needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.
- 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
- Schools generally use force to guide and support pupils and to restrain them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as guiding a pupil out of a classroom.
- Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.
- School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injury to the pupil.

Types of Restrictive Intervention

Restrictive interventions may include:

Passive physical contact

e.g. guiding a pupil by the arm to walk with staff, or placing a hand on a pupil's shoulder to prompt movement, where the pupil is free to move away

Active physical restraint

e.g. holding a pupil's arms or body to prevent them from hitting, running into danger, or causing harm, where the pupil cannot disengage

Non-physical restriction

e.g. standing in a doorway to prevent a pupil leaving an area, or using verbal instruction and positioning to block access without physical contact

Seclusion (see below)

e.g. placing a pupil alone in a room and preventing them from leaving, such as by locking the door or physically blocking the exit

Seclusion

Seclusion is defined as keeping a pupil alone in a space away from others where they are prevented from leaving. This may include:

- Physically blocking exit
- Locking doors or securing spaces
- Creating the belief that the pupil will be punished if they leave
- Must only be used to manage risk of serious harm
- Must never be used as a disciplinary sanction
- Must be time limited and closely supervised

What seclusion does not include:

The following practices do not constitute seclusion, provided that the pupil is not prevented from leaving and appropriate supervision and safeguarding are in place:

- Detention or reflection as part of the behaviour policy

- Where a pupil is required to spend time in a designated space to reflect on their behaviour, this is not seclusion if they are not physically prevented from leaving and the purpose is not to manage an immediate risk of harm.
- Working in a separate room with a member of staff
- Situations where a pupil is asked to complete work in a quieter or alternative space, with staff support or supervision, are not considered seclusion.
- Voluntary time out or self-regulation strategies
- Where a pupil chooses to access a calm space or take time away from others as part of a planned regulation strategy, this is not seclusion.
- Withdrawal for support or intervention
This includes pastoral support, SEN interventions, or de-escalation approaches where the pupil remains free to leave and is supported by staff.

Staff Authorisation

Permanent authorisation:

All teachers and support staff who have control or charge of pupils automatically have the statutory power to use force. This includes teachers, teaching assistants and pupil welfare staff.

Temporary authorisation:

This may be issued by the Headteacher to other members of staff involved in supervising pupils, e.g. site staff, office staff or volunteers. Any such authorisation will be given in advance and will be time limited – for example on a school trip. It is not expected that volunteers would have sole charge of pupils with a behaviour plan or risk assessment – but volunteers may need to exercise force to prevent an accident. This is legal and expected.

Deciding whether to use force.

Force may be considered when:

- There is a need to prevent injury to another pupil and/or member of staff or to the pupil themselves
- A pupil fails to comply with a reasonable instruction to stop an action that is potentially dangerous to themselves or others
- A pupil's actions place in jeopardy the health and safety of others
- A pupil's behaviour seriously prejudices good order and discipline in the school

Members of staff should use the following guidelines to decide whether or not force should be used in particular circumstances:

- The potential consequences of not intervening were sufficiently serious to justify considering using force.
- The chances of achieving the desired result by other means were judged to be low.
- The risk associated with not using force outweighs those of using force.
- There was identifiable risk to other pupils and/or members of staff and/or school property.

Proper account should be made of any particular Special Education Need and/or disability that a pupil may have. Staff must also consider if there are known triggers or Consistent Management Plans for behaviour in place and the potential emotional impact of any intervention.

It is worth noting, however, that decisions often need to be made quickly and that the professional judgement of the member of staff involved is key.

Staff should seek to minimise the most serious risks, for example calling the police for assistance if necessary and ensure that any force used is necessary, reasonable and proportionate.

Using force:

- It is important to use the minimum force necessary to achieve the desired result. It is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.
- A clear verbal warning should be given to the pupil that force may have to be used.
- Restraint that is likely to injure a pupil (particularly anything that could constrict breathing) should only be used in extreme cases or where there was no viable alternative.
- Wherever possible force should not be used unless there is another responsible adult present to support, observe and call for assistance.

The types of force used could include:

- a. Passive physical contact resulting from standing between pupils or blocking pupils
- b. Active physical contact such as:
 - i) leading a pupil by the hand
 - ii) ushering a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back
 - iii) in more extreme cases using appropriate positive handling and physical restraint

Where there is a high and immediate risk of death or serious injury, a member of staff is justified in taking any necessary action (consistent with seeking to use the minimum force required to achieve the desired result) e.g., preventing a pupil running into a busy road or preventing a pupil hitting someone with a dangerous object such as a hammer or glass bottle.

Examples of situations that call for judgements on positive handling will include:

- A pupil attacking a member of staff, or another pupil
- Pupils fighting
- A pupil deliberately damaging property
- A pupil causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, rough play, or by misuse of materials or objects
- A pupil persistently refusing to follow an instruction to leave a classroom
- A pupil behaving in a way that seriously disrupts a lesson, school event or visit
- A pupil placing him/herself at risk by leaving school without permission

In these examples the use of force would be reasonable if the behaviour was sufficiently dangerous or disruptive to warrant physical intervention and could not realistically be dealt with by other means.

Wherever possible:

- A second adult should be present
- The least restrictive option must be used
- The intervention must stop as soon as risk reduces

Recording incidents

In line with the Schools' (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) Regulations 2025, all schools must record and report incidents involving:

In line with the *Schools' (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) Regulations 2025*, all schools must record and report incidents involving:

- **Any use of physical restraint**
Where a pupil is physically prevented from moving or disengaging
- **Any use of non-physical restraint**
Where a pupil is prevented from leaving through blocking, positioning, or instruction
- **Any use of seclusion**
Where a pupil is kept alone and prevented from leaving
- **Any incident resulting in injury or distress**
To the pupil or to staff
- **Any incident involving significant risk of harm**
Including situations where intervention was necessary to prevent injury, damage, or serious disorder

All incidents must be recorded:

- As soon as possible
- No later than the same day wherever practicable
- Using the CPOMS system

Records must include:

Names of pupils and staff involved

Date, time, location and duration

What happened

Why intervention was necessary

De-escalation strategies used

Type and level of force used

Any injuries sustained

Follow-up actions taken

CPOMS will be used to maintain accurate and secure records.

Reporting to Parents

Parents/carers must be informed:

As soon as practicable

Normally on the same day

Exceptions apply only where informing parents would place the child at risk.

Where parents have needed to be informed of the use of restraint and/or seclusion then Appendix A will be completed and a copy sent to parents. This will be uploaded onto a child's CPOMS record.

Positive Handling and Restraint

A hold that a child can move out of, such as a one-person or two-person guide, does not constitute restraint. In these situations, the pupil retains the ability to disengage from the physical contact.

These approaches are considered part of positive handling strategies

A written report to parents is not required in these instances.

However, verbal communication with parents/carers should take place as part of good practice.

Restraint

Restraint occurs when a pupil is prevented from moving away or disengaging from the hold. This involves a level of physical intervention where the pupil is unable to freely remove themselves. In such cases, the use of restraint must be:

- Recorded in writing
- Reported to parents/carers in line with school policy

The determining factor is whether the pupil is able to move away from the hold:

Able to move away → Positive handling (no written report required)

Unable to move away → Restraint (written report required)

CPOMS should be used for recording all incidents – when ‘Behaviour incident’ is selected. When seclusion and restraint is used then a ‘Significant Incident Reporting’ form should be completed, uploaded to CPOMS and sent to parents.

7. Complaints

All complaints made relating to the use of force will be dealt with according to the school’s complaints procedure. Allegations about a member of staff will follow Kent County Council guidelines.

8. Training

All teaching staff will receive regular training as part of INSET provision on the appropriate use of force.

Identified staff will also have additional training in types of restraint. Training will include:

- De-escalation strategies
- Safe use of restrictive interventions
- Legal duties around recording and reporting
- Safeguarding implications

9. Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher and members of the Leadership Team will monitor the use of this policy on a day to day basis. Periodic reports will be made to the Governing Body about the use and implementation of this policy.

The policy is subject to regular review, according to the cycle of policy review determined by the Governing Body.

The school will:

- Analyse data related to use of restrictive interventions
- Identify patterns or disproportionate use (e.g. SEND pupils)
- Use findings to improve practice
- Report trends to the Governing Body

9. Equal Opportunities:

The governors and staff are committed to providing the full range of opportunities for all pupils, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, social, cultural or religious background. All pupils have access to the curriculum, and the right to a learning environment, which dispels ignorance, prejudice or stereotyping.

SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT REPORT FORM

This template is to be used to record **all significant incidents** involving restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, restraint and seclusion.

Section 1: Basic Incident Details

School Name:	Woodlands Primary School		
Date of Incident			
Time Incident Started		Time Incident Ended	
Total Duration			
Location(s) of Incident			

Section 2: Staff Involved

Your Name:	
Name of staff member leading the intervention:	
Other persons present	

Section 3: Type of Force Used

Type of Force (Tick all that apply)	
Restraint	Seclusion

Section 4: Report of Incident

Adult statement – what occurred in your own words Your statement must set out what happened; give details of your part in the significant incident, your 'Honestly Held Belief', what use of restrictive intervention that you have used and how the incident was finally resolved. It should give details of any attempts made to de-escalate throughout the incident. Your statement should be completed independently of other staff involved in the incident. The written report must be completed as soon as practicable after the event. Staff should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.	
The use of force must only be used when it is reasonable in the circumstance, meaning: - You believed that it was absolutely necessary & Proportionate to the seriousness of the situation	If physical restraint was used, please tick your primary role: ☐ Right arm ☐ Left arm ☐ Supervising

Antecedents and Context	
What were you doing just before the significant incident took place?	
What was the pupil doing just before the significant incident took place?	
What signs of dysregulation were being communicated by the pupil?	
Explain what you think may have triggered this behaviour?	
How did you try to de-escalate the situation?	
What was the pupil's response?	
Dynamic Risk Assessment & Rationale	
Why did you believe it was necessary to use restrictive intervention on the child/ young person?	
To prevent or stop harm to themselves	To prevent or stop harm to others
To prevent or stop a crime	To prevent or stop damage to property
To prevent or stop causing disorder at the school	Other – Please specify
Describe exactly what happened (i.e. what use of force were used and by whom, why it was absolutely necessary, strictly proportionate and what your 'Honestly Held Belief' was, other steps taken to gain assistance)	
It is my honestly held belief that that it was absolutely, necessary and proportionate to	
Did any other factors impact on your choice of intervention? (Welfare/Medical conditions / SEND considerations)	
Ending the Intervention	
What indicated that the risk had reduced and the intervention could end?	
How was the pupil helped back to calm state of regulation?	
Injury or Distress	
Did the pupil sustain an injury or report pain or distress? If so, what did you do?	
Did any staff member sustain an injury or report pain or distress? If so, what did you do?	
Staff Member's Name:	
Staff member's signature:	
Date/Time:	