



The purpose of this policy is to make clear the position of St Mary's Catholic School with regards to physical contact and necessary physical interventions and to safeguard the well-being of students and staff when a situation or incident requires the use of physical intervention. It is the aim of St Mary's Catholic School to maintain consistent and safe practices in the use of handling, reasonable force & restraint to ensure the safety and well-being of all members of our school community.

Physical Intervention and the Law

The law allows all adults who are authorised by the Headteacher to be responsible for students to use such force as is reasonable to prevent a student:

- Committing a criminal offence (or for younger children that which would be an offence)
- Causing personal injury, injury to others or damage to property
- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline

Staff should not hesitate to act in these situations provided they follow this policy; however, they should always satisfy themselves that the action they take would be considered justifiable by a wider audience of their professional colleagues.

Definition of Terms:

Handling – refers to any physical intervention applied by a member of staff where it is necessary to make physical contact with a student in order to manage their conduct or ensure their own or others safety. Handling strategies may be restrictive or non-restrictive and include shepherding, guiding, supporting, blocking, confining, holding and, in the most extreme cases, restraining.

Use of Reasonable Force – is the application of appropriate and proportionate force required to achieve the required outcome from the handling strategy employed (see above) without further endangering the student, member of staff or others present at the time of physical intervention.

Restraint - is the positive application of force in order to actively prevent a child from causing significant injury* to himself/herself or others or seriously damaging property.

*Significant Injury would include: actual or grievous bodily harm, physical or sexual abuse, risking the lives of, or injury to, themselves or others by wilful or reckless behaviour, and self-poisoning. It must be shown that on any occasion where physical restraint is used there were strong indicators that if immediate action had not been taken, significant injury would have followed.

Implementation of Physical Intervention:

- All members of staff working with students at the school are authorised to handle, use reasonable force or restrain students if/when such physical intervention is necessary.
- No member of staff is required to employ any physical intervention strategy if they are not comfortable or confident to do so effectively.
- No member of staff should intervene physically if they have reason to believe that to do so would worsen the situation/incident that is taking place.
- In all circumstances where physical intervention is or may become required members of staff should ensure that adult assistance is requested before intervention, although it is understood that circumstances may lead to the need for intervention prior to the assistance arriving.
- Staff considering handling, use of reasonable force or restraint must provide opportunity for the student to alter their behaviour/actions before employing a physical intervention strategy and should continue to make instructions to the student and details of their intended interventions clear.
- The method of physical intervention employed must use the minimum reasonable force for the minimum length of time.

Procedures

Recording Physical Intervention

- All incidents where staff feel that they have used force to modify behaviour or conduct should be recorded.
- Staff should ensure a written record of such instances is submitted to a Designated Safeguarding Lead in school. The Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher will also be informed of the intervention that has taken place.
- It is the responsibility of the intervening member of staff to report such instances to a Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible following the incident.
- The circumstances and nature of the physical intervention will be held on the pastoral record of the student involved.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead will inform any necessary agencies/authorities of the physical intervention in accordance with DfE guidance. The Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher will ensure that parents/carers are appropriately informed as soon as possible.
- For the safeguarding of both staff and students, any subsequent investigation of the situation/incident should be undertaken by a member of staff other than the one applying the physical intervention.

Searching Students

- On occasions a member of staff may have reasonable grounds to suspect that a student is in possession of an item or items which contravene school regulations and could potentially cause harm to the student or others. Under these circumstances The Education Act 2011 extends the power of staff to search students without their consent.
- Searches will be conducted by two members of staff, at least one of whom will be the same sex as the student.
- Students may be offered the opportunity to have their parents/carers present. However, depending on the situation this may not be possible.
- St Mary's Catholic School does not endorse and will not undertake a physical search of any students' person. Where necessary a student will be asked to remove his/her coat and/or blazer, empty all pockets, open their bags and in some circumstances remove their shoes and socks. Possessions and items of apparel that have been removed may then be searched by the staff present.
- If undesirable items are discovered the school will use its power of confiscation to retain the offending item(s).
- Parents/carers, if not present, will be contacted to explain what has been found and any subsequent sanctions that have been applied. Where appropriate, parents/carers will be invited to retrieve the offending property and asked to ensure that they are not brought to school again.
- In the event that illegal items are discovered then the Police will be informed immediately.

Other appropriate physical contact

During some lessons, including dance, drama and sport lessons, some physical contact may be deemed necessary between staff and students. Physical instruction which involves safe touch is sometimes essential to aid effective teaching and learning i.e. awareness of correct muscle usage, to perfect a certain dance movement etc.

There may be other circumstances where physical contact is appropriate; for example, to comfort a student, to give reassurance or to congratulate a student. This might include shaking hands with a student, putting an arm around their shoulders or holding a student's hand. Such instances will be rare but may be necessary to congratulate, calm or care for a student where appropriate.

In all such cases:

- Students and staff will always work in an open environment avoiding private unobserved situations.
- The intention behind all physical contact will be professional and unambiguous.
- All students will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.

Policy review date	By whom	Approved (insert date)
September 2025	Local Governing Committee	10 th October 2025