

ST PETERS SCHOOL PHYSICAL INTERVENTION POLICY

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE:

St. Peter's School is located on the grounds of the Lucena Clinic, Rathgar and caters for young people with Severe Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. Our school has a dedicated staff who work with the students in small class groups and on one-to-one support programs. The school has a capacity for 60 students. There are 10 classes, 6 at primary level and 4 at Junior Cycle level. Each class generally has 6 students, a teacher and 1 to 2 SNAs.

St Peter's school understands that behaviour is a form of communication and can reflect an unmet need. We endeavour to ensure that all our students feel a sense of belonging, feel connected, listened to and are actively engaged in their social, emotional, academic and physical learning. Students who are engaged are less likely to present with behaviours of concern. It is notable that such behaviours can be caused by internal triggers from elements outside of school. Staff, therefore, work hard to establish a trusted, supportive relationship with all pupils to better understand their behaviour as a form of communication. Despite these efforts, behaviours of concern can still evolve into safety risks. Staff have a duty of care to students and may need to implement restrictive practices to ensure the safety of students and staff alike.

St. Peter's School recognises that there is a need, reflected in common law, to intervene when there is an obvious safety risk to our students and staff. We are committed to ensuring that all staff and adults with responsibility for children's safety and welfare deal with all incidents involving aggressive or unsafe behaviour professionally. This involves only using physical intervention as a last resort, in the interest of safety and in line with maintaining a respectful, supportive relationship with the student and parent/guardians. We will always aim to ensure minimal risk of injury to students and staff. De-escalation techniques will be used before any other responses are considered.

This policy has been drawn up in the context of the School Ethos and Mission Statement, the Code of Behaviour of St. Peter's School, the Health and Safety Statement, the Welfare at Work Act (2005) and St. Peter's School Child Protection Policy and aims to reflect best practice in the management of behaviours of concern. This policy applies to all staff who are authorised to use physical intervention. This is supported by Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) training which all staff receive. This training is provided by the Department of Education and the NCSE. It is to ensure the care, welfare, safety, and security of all our students and staff here at St. Peter's School.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Physical intervention refers to the use of minimum reasonable holding of a student to prevent or avert serious injury to a person, or to assist a student who may need to be brought to a safe place. It can also describe the employment of disengagement techniques to avoid injury and prevent an incident from further escalation. Physical

intervention in St. Peter's school is carried out based on CPI intervention training, provided by the Department of Education. This model incorporates trauma informed and person-centred approaches. The programme focuses on preventing and/ or de-escalating in crisis situations, with a focus on prevention. Staff are taught de-escalation skills as well as non-restrictive and restrictive interventions.

The aims and objectives of these policy guidelines are to:

- Prevent / reduce injuries to students, staff and others that could lead to an unsafe environment for students and Staff
- Provide clear guidelines to staff, students, and parents regarding the use of restrictive physical interventions and when they are necessary to keep people safe.
- Emphasise a culture within the school of prevention and reduction of the use of restrictive physical interventions.
- Promote the development of effective relationships, mood management and interpersonal skills.
- Manage serious incidents when they occur.
- Help and encourage staff to pre-empt the need to use restrictive practices by being observant of pre-cursors that may lead to a challenging situation.
- Promote a culture of 'positive handling' throughout the school, focusing on mood management, the development of effective relationships, de-escalation, diffusion and distraction strategies
- Manage serious incidents safely when they occur, to prevent injury to the child and others.
- Outline a consistent reporting procedure to ensure the oversight and accountability of any physical interventions used.

Staff view physical intervention or restraint of students as a last resort to maintaining a safe environment. If students are behaving in a dangerous manner, every effort will be made to manage behaviour positively to prevent a deterioration of the situation. CPI de-escalation techniques will be used to prevent further escalation of the situation. Acting immediately before, or, as behaviour escalates can be highly effective in reducing the student's distress and minimising behaviours that may lead to a crisis situation. De-escalation techniques will be used before any other responses are considered. De-escalation techniques will be individualised to each student and note taken of them in their Positive Behaviour Support Plans. See appendix 1. They should include:

- Awareness of student's individual early signs of escalation.
- Individual knowledge of the student to understand what may be being communicated by the behaviour.
- Student specific re-direction
- The identification of students' individual triggers and attempt to mitigate them prior to any behaviours.
- To be reviewed by staff and parents/guardians following the use of an intervention/ after a serious incident.
- All serious incidents of challenging behaviour are documented using the Incident report template attached in appendix 2.

The following principles should be employed by staff who are considering using a restrictive physical intervention:

- Is this action in the best interests of the child?
- Use maximum care, minimum force
- Is the action reasonable, proportionate and necessary?
- Have I considered the level of behaviour, age/ height/ physical ability/ understanding and gender of the pupil in question.
- Only for reasons of safety (never for sanction, punishment or convenience).
- Part of an agreed PBSP which has been discussed and agreed with parents/guardian.

When managing an incident staff will consider the following guidelines.

1. During an incident or when exhibiting challenging behaviour, a pupil's actions may be adversely affected by the presence of an audience.
2. Wherever possible, the audience will be removed, or if this is not possible, the pupil will be encouraged to withdraw to a quieter space.
3. Where possible, staff who have not been involved in the initial confrontation leading to an incident may be in a better position to intervene. Staff intervening with children will seek assistance from other members of staff if it is required.
4. To minimise the distress of the student and to ensure that the dignity and wellbeing of the student is always preserved, all interventions will involve more than one staff member where appropriate. An intervention will not normally take place until the staff member has the support/ attention of a colleague(s) unless, they perceive that there is an immediate risk to another student, staff member or the student themselves. Staff members have a duty of care to the students and each other during an incident. They have a responsibility to provide a presence and to offer support and assistance should this be required.
5. Should physical intervention be necessary, staff will be aware of the need to communicate with the pupil being restrained, in a calm, gentle manner and explain that the reason for the intervention is to keep the pupil and others safe. Staff will maintain communication with the student in question, in an appropriate manner. This will allow staff to gauge if/ when the pupil is calming.
6. Physical Intervention will always be used only as a last resort. If a physical intervention is necessary and appropriate, staff will monitor the well-being of the individual student continuously throughout the intervention and for the remainder of the day.
7. Parents of the students will be informed that a physical intervention has taken place and the reasons surrounding the necessity for this intervention will be discussed with them at the earliest opportunity.

*Note: There may be situations where due to a student's medical condition (i.e. epilepsy) it would be inappropriate to engage in physical intervention with that student. Staff and parents will agree alternate crisis strategies to be used for this situation where appropriate. These will be stated in the student's individual Positive Behaviour Support Plan.

If staff believe the situation is too difficult to be managed by school personnel, the Gardai will be called after consultation with school management and parents/guardians.

A consistent reporting procedure is maintained to provide staff with the opportunity to reflect on the interventions used and reevaluate, if necessary, their responses. The procedure is as follows:

1. Staff will have considered the information provided to them from the previous teacher, or in the case of new pupils; the admissions paperwork, to determine if physical interventions may need to be included as part of a student's PBSP (Appendix 1).
2. In the event of an incident, the use of a physical intervention will be detailed in the Critical Incident Report, as shown in Appendix 2, at the earliest possible convenience. This is submitted to the principal.
3. Staff are provided the opportunity to debrief and reflect on the incident and will submit their reflection of the incident, using Appendix 3, to the Principal for discussion. This reflection will also be used to review the PBSP to determine if it should be adapted considering the incident in question.
4. Any event of Physical Intervention will be reported to the Board of Management by the Principal.
5. The Principal will submit a record of the use of physical restraint/ intervention to the NCSE. (Appendix 4)

Promoting the Student's Well-being

The underlying ethos of St. Peter's School endeavours to provide a safe and caring learning environment for all students. An Individual Educational Programme (IEP) is drawn up for every student in collaboration with parents/guardians which addresses each student's intellectual, social, emotional and behavioural needs. An individual Positive Behaviour Support Plan (PBSP) is drawn up for all students and may, if the student is exhibiting extreme challenging behaviour, include the possible need for physical intervention. However, situations may arise where students who do not expressly have physical interventions outlined their plan exhibit behaviour which requires restrictive practices be utilised, in this instance staff will inform parents and work to include any necessary changes in the plan going forward. The PBSP is designed to meet the needs of the individual student and to address specific targeted areas of behaviour. A PBSP is drawn up in consultation with the parents/guardians of the student. The PBSP is reviewed according to the on-going needs of the student.

Strategies for Management of Challenging Behaviour

Staff have been given the training necessary to identify the signs indicating the onset of challenging behaviour. As staff and students develop positive teaching and learning relationships such signs will become familiar to staff who will use verbal de-escalation techniques, behaviour programmes and reward charts to manage challenging behaviour. Other strategies, such as changing the personnel in a group, and changing the activity or venue with a view to maintaining a safe and positive teaching and learning environment will also be used. If a staff member perceives that a potentially dangerous situation may be developing, for example, if a student exhibits behaviour which could result in an injury to him/herself, another student or a member of staff, they will firstly move other students to a safe place. If it

is apparent to staff that verbal de-escalation techniques are not sufficient to ensure the safety of the distressed student or others present it may be necessary to employ a physical intervention. Physical interventions may also be used to prevent a student from leaving a safe area, for example the school grounds, if it is agreed by the staff dealing with the situation that this will place the student in immediate danger.

Roles & responsibilities:

Parents

The role of parents/guardians in supporting staff and working in partnership with the school to manage their child's behaviours in a crisis situation is very important. Open, transparent communication is essential to this partnership which acknowledges the duty of care that staff have towards the young people in their care. Parents will always be informed if a physical intervention has taken place. Where this is an agreed part of the PBSP parents will already have been given the policy on physical intervention. Where an unanticipated physical intervention is required, parents will be notified immediately and given a copy of this policy.

Board of Management

The Board of Management of St Peters School has a responsibility to

- Read, provide input and approve this policy to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students and staff under their authority.
- Review this policy annually.
- To ensure the provision of the necessary training required for staff to be capable of implementing this policy.
- Assist the principal in any issues they may bring to the Board regarding the implementation of this policy.
- Maintain a record of any incidents of physical intervention within the school.

Principal

It is the responsibility of the Principal to:

- Promote a culture of wellbeing within the school.
- Ensure this policy is available to all staff.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of and understand the importance of assessing a situation, the method of restrictive intervention and circumstances where it is sanctioned for use.
- Ensure that any restrictive intervention which is advised is approved by the Principal. The only exception to this is when a restrictive intervention is deemed necessary in an emergency. All unplanned emergency restrictive interventions must be reported to the principal.
- Ensure that all staff attend appropriate and continuing training as required.
- Provide supervision, support and review in respect of the implementation of the policy.
- Report the use of any physical intervention to the Board of Management.
- Identify problems that may prevent the full implementation of the policy, bring them to the attention of the Board of Management and agree ways in which to address the problems identified.

- Ensure that all staff involved in physical intervention are given time to debrief.
- Report any instances of Physical intervention to the NCSE, as per circular 008/2024, using the form attached in Appendix 4.

Staff Members

It is the responsibility of staff to:

- Be fully aware of the content of the policy and adhere to the content.
- Always promote a restrictive free environment.
- Ensure that all PBSP's, including any physical interventions listed in them, have been sanctioned by the principal.
- Familiarize themselves with, understand and act in accordance with the student's individual Positive Behaviour Support Plan (PBSP) in line with the student's best interest.
- Have a duty of care to protect pupils from the risk of physical or psychological harm associated with the use of restrictive interventions.
- Attend training when required.
- If a restrictive intervention has been used, notify the Principal/Deputy Principal as soon as they can safely do so.
- Submit written record of the incident to the Principal using the document in Appendix 2.
- Avail themselves of a debrief and reflection through use of Appendix 3.

If a physical intervention is used staff must ask themselves the following questions:

- Am I using the minimum effort for the shortest time?
- Can I reduce the amount of pressure?
- How best can I communicate with the pupils and with other staff?
- Should I ask someone else to take over?

Staff Training

The Board of Management of St. Peter's School consider that staff training particularly in the prevention and de-escalation of crisis situations including the use of Physical Intervention is essential. The principal in collaboration with the school management team has responsibility to ensure that an appropriate level of professional training be provided for staff on an ongoing basis. This will involve a annual refresher courses for CPI provided by the Department of Education and the NCSE. The principal will ensure that all new permanent and temporary staff members will be trained as part of their induction programme.

Procedures for Documenting Critical Incidents

All incidents using physical interventions will be recorded and documented within 24 hours of the incident itself. This will involve all staff involved in the incident filling out a significant incident report stating the following which is to be signed and submitted to the principal or deputy principal

- Student name, date, time, and location
- What happened
- Who was at risk
- De-escalation techniques used
- Physical intervention used
- Student's Welfare
- Staff's welfare

Crisis Intervention Follow-up and Accountability

- Staff members will debrief after the incident in order to examine different perspectives and evaluate strategy goes implemented. This could affect future verbal de-escalation strategies, physical interventions and initiate adjustments to PBSP's.
- Responsibility for ensuring that this is implemented lies with the principal.
- Students who may have witnessed physical intervention will be supported appropriately. The principal will assign a member of staff to ensure that any upset is minimized, and normal routine is restored.
- Staff involved also need to be supported after an intervention to offset any upset they may experience in the course of their professional work.

Review of Policy

The Board of Management and Management Team of St. Peter' s School in consultation with staff will review this policy annually.

Ratification:

This revised policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management in June 2025.

Signed:



Mr Eoin Ó'Donnagáin

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 17th June 2025

Signed:



Ms Rosemary Fahy

Principal St Peters School

Date: 17th June 2025

Appendix 1:

St Peter’s School Positive Behaviour Support Plan

Student:

Class:

Persons involved in the formation of the plan	Person responsible for implementation of this plan:
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Key Behaviour of Concern	Triggers	Staff Response

Dates and Decisions: Parent/guardian involvement:

Appendix 2: Incident Report

St. Peter's School Incident Report (Including Risk Review)

Student:

Location:

Time:

Date:

Student:	Location:	Time:	Date:
What happened?			
What triggered the incident?			
Whom/what was at risk?			

Pupil Welfare:

List any de-escalation/ positive intervention strategies that you used to diffuse the incident	
Did you need to use a restrictive practice or physical intervention? (be specific)	
Why was this in the best interests of the child?	
How effective was it?	
Was the child distressed?	
How was the child assisted to recover/ repair relationships with staff / other pupils?	
How can we reduce the risk of this happening again?	
Was medical intervention needed?	

Staff Welfare:

Did you or another member of staff find this incident distressing? Yes/no	
Was Medical intervention needed? Please inform Management if you require further debriefing today.	
Actions: Action taken: (phone call, suspension, meeting, detention, loss of yard etc)	
Teacher Signature:	Date:
Principal/DP Signature:	Date:

Appendix 3: Staff Reflection Form

For use by individual teachers for self-reflection to inform future actions and/or

For use by groups of teachers for staff reflection at a meeting to inform future actions

(The language used in this record needs to be objective, factual and non-judgemental)

Events leading to the incident - Describe what was happening before the behaviour started to escalate. What was the student doing? What do you think might have triggered the behaviour? How were other students reacting to the student?

Behaviour of the student - What did you notice about the student's behaviour that alerted you that they were struggling to cope? Think about the way they looked, for example, facial expressions, physical signs, language.

What message do you believe the student was trying to communicate during this incident?

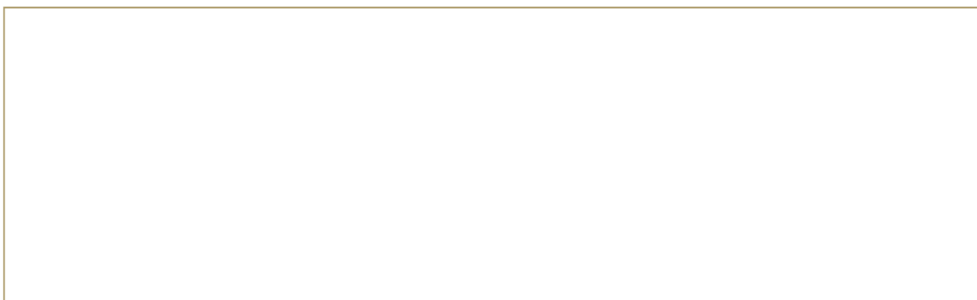
What did you try before the restraint? - Describe the alternative techniques and interventions tried to prevent the emergency, including a description of the de-escalation strategies you used. What was the response of the student?

The restraint method used - Describe the nature of the physical restraint. Include the type of restraint, the duration and the number of people that participated.

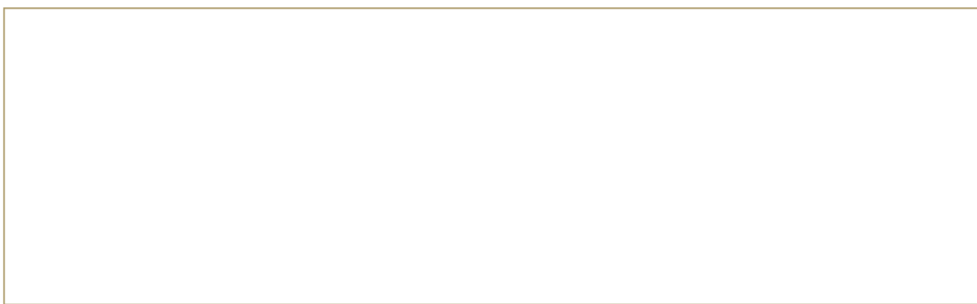
Monitoring - Describe how the student's physical and emotional distress was monitored while they were restrained.

After the restraint ended - Describe the mood of the student following the restraint. What help and support were they offered or did they request.

How about you? - How are you feeling and what support do you need? How about others?



Next Steps? - Plan for maintaining/repairing relationships with the student: What could be done differently in the future to prevent the need for restraint? E.g. review of environment, communication skills, learning needs, health check, sensory needs, emotional wellbeing etc.



This process should inform a review of the student's support plan, in consultation with the student, parents/guardians, and a review of whole school policy and practice.

Appendix 4:

Resource 4 'Understanding Behaviours of Concern and responding to Crisis Situations'

NCSE Record of Incident involving Physical Restraint Form

(In line with a rights-based approach the language used in this record needs to be objective, factual, and non-judgmental)

No personal details of person/s involved should be included in this report.

School details			
School Name			
School roll number			
Student details			
Age of student			
Confirmed Special Educational Need, (if applicable)			
Details of incident			
Date		Time	
Location			
Duration			
Description of the incident			
DESCRIBE WHAT WAS HAPPENING IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT (e.g., activities that the student was engaged in; behaviours of other students; changes to the environment or the usual routine, etc.).			