



ST. PETER'S SCHOOL
BUILDING OUR FUTURE



Physical Intervention Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy outlines the approach of St. Peter's School in the use of physical intervention in line with the Department of Education and Youth *Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations* (circular 0081/2024 and circular 0042/2026)

The school is committed to:

- Promoting a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment
- Supporting students with social, emotional and behavioural needs
- Using preventative, relational, and de-escalation approaches as the primary response to behaviours of concern

Physical intervention is recognised as a high-risk, restrictive practice and will only be used as a last resort in exceptional circumstances. The policy is grounded in national child protection requirements, including *Children First: National Guidance* and the *Child Protection Procedures for Schools*, which require that the welfare and best interests of the child are paramount, and that all children are treated with dignity, respect, and protection from harm. The school also follows guidance from the RELATE document, emphasising relationship-based, low-arousal, and trauma-informed strategies in supporting students' behaviours.

Rationale

Students in an SEBD setting may, at times, present with behaviours that pose a risk to their own safety or the safety of others. The rationale for this policy is to:

- Ensure clear, consistent and lawful practice
- Protect the rights, dignity and safety of students and staff
- Provide guidance on appropriate responses to crisis situations

- Ensure compliance with: Department of Education and Youth guidelines, Child protection and welfare legislation, best practice in behaviour support and trauma-informed care

The policy reflects the principle that physical intervention is never used for discipline, punishment, or compliance, but only as a last resort in crisis situations.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of this policy are to:

- Promote a safe environment by preventing and reducing the risk of injury to students, staff, and others
- Provide clear guidance to staff, students, and parents/guardians on the use of physical intervention, including when it may be necessary to ensure safety
- Promote a preventative, whole-school approach, with a strong emphasis on reducing the need for restrictive physical interventions
- Support the development of positive relationships, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills among students
- Encourage early intervention, supporting staff to recognise and respond to early warning signs and triggers that may lead to behaviours of concern
- Promote positive handling approaches, including de-escalation strategies, in line with best practice
- Ensure that any necessary physical intervention is carried out safely, proportionately, and only in response to serious incidents involving immediate risk
- Provide a consistent framework for managing serious incidents, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all involved
- Ensure clear recording, reporting, and oversight procedures, promoting accountability and ongoing review of practice

Definition of Physical Intervention

Physical intervention is defined as any act where a staff member uses physical contact to restrict a student's movement to prevent harm.

It may only be used where:

- There is imminent risk of serious physical harm
- No other less restrictive alternatives are effective

Guiding Principles

The following principles underpin all decisions and actions relating to the use of physical intervention in the school:

- *Best Interests of the Child*
Any decision to use physical intervention must be guided by what is in the best interests of the child, with their dignity, wellbeing, and rights central at all times.
- *Last Resort and Safety-Focused*
Physical intervention will be used only as a last resort, and solely in situations where there is an immediate risk to safety.
- *Proportionality*
Any intervention must be reasonable, necessary, and proportionate, for the shortest duration required.
- *Individual Consideration*
Staff will take account of the individual circumstances of the student, including age, size, physical ability, level of understanding, gender, and presentation of behaviour.
- *Prevention and Early Intervention*
Staff will remain alert to early warning signs and triggers, and prioritise de-escalation and preventative strategies to reduce the likelihood of crisis situations.
- *Respect and Dignity*
Every effort will be made to preserve the student's dignity, including reducing or removing an audience where possible, or supporting the student to move to a quieter space.
- *Team-Based Approach and Duty of Care*
Staff will work collaboratively during incidents. Where possible, more than one staff member will be involved in an intervention, and support will be sought from colleagues. All staff have a duty of care to students and to one another.
- *Calm Communication and Relationship-Based Practice*
Staff will communicate in a calm, respectful, and reassuring manner, explaining that the purpose of the intervention is to keep everyone safe, and supporting the student to regulate.
- *Continuous Monitoring of Wellbeing*
The student's physical and emotional wellbeing will be continuously monitored during and after any intervention.
- *Parental Communication*
Parents/guardians will be informed as soon as practicable following any incident involving physical intervention, and the circumstances will be clearly explained.
- If staff believe the situation is too difficult or dangerous to be managed by school personnel, the Gardai will be called by School Management.

Staff Training

The Board of Management recognises that staff training is essential in supporting the prevention and de-escalation of crisis situations, including the safe and appropriate use of physical intervention. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that staff receive an appropriate level of ongoing professional training in line with best practice and national guidance.

- All staff receive training in prevention, de-escalation, and safe intervention approaches, including training in Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) methodologies
- Two members of staff are accredited CPI trainers and deliver whole-school training
- Training is reviewed and updated regularly to ensure consistency and compliance with current guidance
- Staff receive training in Trauma Responsive Education
- Teachers are participating in NCSE Relate training in a staggered manner

This approach ensures that staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to respond safely, effectively, and proportionately to behaviours of concern.

Roles and Responsibilities

Principal

The Principal has overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of this policy and will:

- Ensure the policy is implemented consistently across the school
- Promote a whole-school, preventative approach to behaviours of concern
- Ensure appropriate training (including CPI) is in place for all staff
- Oversee the recording, reporting, and review of all incidents involving physical intervention
- Ensure that parents/guardians are informed following any incident
- Report to the Board of Management and relevant bodies as required
- Support staff following incidents and ensure appropriate follow-up and review

School Staff

All staff share responsibility for the safe and appropriate implementation of this policy and will:

- Prioritise prevention, de-escalation, and relationship-based approaches
- Follow agreed Student Support Plans (SSPs)
- Use physical intervention only as a last resort, in line with training and policy
- Ensure any intervention is reasonable, proportionate, and necessary
- Maintain the dignity and wellbeing of the student at all times

- Seek assistance from colleagues where required
- Record and report all incidents accurately and promptly
- Engage in training (including CPI) and adhere to agreed practices
- Participate in post-incident review and reflection
- Highlight with management any staff training needs

Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians play an important role in supporting the school's approach and will:

- Work in partnership with the school to support their child's behaviour and wellbeing
- Engage, where appropriate, in the development and review of SSPs
- Be informed of incidents involving physical intervention and engage in follow-up discussions as required
- Share relevant information with the school that may support the safe and effective management of behaviours of concern

Board of Management

The Board of Management is responsible for the overall governance and oversight of this policy and will:

- Read, provide input, and approve this policy to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students and staff
- Review the policy annually to ensure it remains current and effective
- Ensure the provision of appropriate staff training, including CPI, so staff can implement the policy safely and effectively
- Support the Principal with any issues arising from the implementation of this policy
- Maintain oversight and records of all incidents involving physical intervention within the school

Recording and Reporting

In line with Department of Education requirements:

Recording

All incidents of physical intervention must be recorded (Appendix A), including:

- Date, time, location
- Antecedents and triggers
- Description of behaviour
- Type and duration of intervention
- Staff involved

- Outcome and follow-up actions

Reporting

- Report to Principal immediately
- Report to Board of Management
- Inform parents/guardians
- From September 2025, all incidents must be reported to the NCSE (Appendix B)

Parents/Guardians

In some instances, parents may be unhappy about the way in which a school managed the use of physical restraint and has addressed this through the school's complaints procedures. It is envisaged that the majority of complaints will be resolved to the satisfaction of both the parents and the school concerned. However, it is acknowledged that there may be instances in which some parents are still not satisfied despite having followed the school's complaints procedure.

From September 2026, parents will have access to a designated portal, which will enable them to bring their complaint to the Department for consideration. The group that will consider the parents' complaint will be independent of the department and will include former inspectors and psychologists as well as representatives of education stakeholder and advocacy groups. Appendix C below sets out the process that will apply in facilitating parents to access the portal.

Restorative Practice

Following any incident involving physical intervention, the school adopts restorative approaches to prioritise the rebuilding of relationships and the emotional wellbeing of all involved.

The aims of restorative practice are to:

- Rebuild trust and relationships between the student, staff, and peers affected by the incident
- Support the student to understand the impact of their behaviour on themselves and others
- Encourage reflection and personal responsibility, in a supportive and non-punitive way
- Repair any harm caused to staff-student relationships, ensuring the student continues to feel safe and respected

This policy has been drawn up by the principal in collaboration with the staff of St. Peter's School and in consultation with the Board of Management. It will be made available to all members of the school community.

This policy will be reviewed annually and amended if necessary.

Rosemary Fahy

Principal St. Peter's School



Signed:

Date: 29th April 2026

Eoin Ó Donnagáin

Chairperson to the Board of Management



Signed:

Date: 29th April 2026

Appendix A

St. Peter's School Incident Report (Including Risk Review) 2025/26

Student:		Location:	
Date:		Time:	

What triggered the incident?	Whom/what was at risk?
What happened?	How did staff respond?

ed: 14/10/2025

Did you use a restrictive practice?	
Why was this in the best interests of the child?	
Was the child distressed?	
Was medical intervention needed?	

Staff Welfare:

Number of staff needed to manage incident safely:
Was Medical intervention needed?
<small>*Please inform Management if you require further debriefing today.</small>

Restorative Practice:

Action taken: (phone call, suspension, meeting, detention).	
How was the child assisted to recover/ repair relationships with staff / other pupils?	
How can we reduce the risk of this happening again?	

Teacher Signature:	Date:
Principal/DP Signature:	Date:

Appendix B

Resource 4: 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-judgemental)

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

Information provided in Resource 4 may be shared with the Department of Education and Youth, as outlined on page 52 of the Guidelines.

Special School <input type="checkbox"/>		Mainstream <input type="checkbox"/>		Special Class <input type="checkbox"/>		Student's Age <input type="text"/>	
Confirmed special education need (if applicable)				SEN <input type="checkbox"/>		No SEN <input type="checkbox"/>	
School Name & County			Roll Number				
Has an incident been reported for this student previously?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>			
If yes how many Times?							
Details and description of the physical restraint used (No personal details of person/s involved should be included in this report.)							
Date		Time		Duration of incident		Location of incident	
How long was the student restrained for?				What type of restraint was used?			
Brief description of what was happening prior to the incident (e.g., activities that the student was engaged in; dysregulating factors or stressors; changes to the environment or the usual routine, etc.). (No personal details of person/s involved should be included in this report.)							
Brief description of what happened immediately after the incident (staff responses, reactions of students, any other notable information) (No personal details of person/s involved should be included in this report.)							

Any other details deemed relevant in relation to the incident
(No personal details of person/s involved should be included in this report.)

Role of person completing this incident report	
Confirm a representative of the board of management or chairperson have been informed. Important Do not submit to NCSE until the BoM have been informed	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Date of Board of Management meeting	
Has this incident been reported to the parent/legal guardian?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Has the parent/legal guardian been advised this incident has been reported to the NCSE?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Date reported to the parent/legal guardian	

Child protection concern

Is this incident considered to be a child protection issue?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please confirm it has been reported to Tusla at this link Report a ConcernTusla - Child and Family Agency	
Role of person who reported the Child Protection Concern	
Date Child Protection Concern report was made	
Time Child Protection Concern report was made	

Please tick training your school has received

Understanding Behaviour <input type="checkbox"/>	Understanding & Supporting Behaviour (PP) <input type="checkbox"/>
The Relate Model of Support <input type="checkbox"/>	An Introduction to Autism <input type="checkbox"/>
2 Day Introduction to Autism for New Teachers in Autism Classes	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 day Introduction to Autism for New Teachers of New Special Classes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting Autistic Students in Special Schools	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p>Principal's Signature To make your document read only please type your name and digitally sign in the box opposite Please only submit to NCSE when signed by the Principal.</p>	
<p>Date</p>	

Please ensure the principal has signed this report before submitting to bocreports@ncse.ie

Appendix C

Process for Parents/Guardians if unhappy with management of an incident of physical restraint

If a parent/guardian has followed the school's complaints process in relation to an incident of physical restraint and remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may submit a complaint through the DEY Portal. Complaints submitted via the DEY Portal will be examined by an independent review group.

Using the DEY Portal for Complaints concerning Incidents of Physical Restraint

Step 1. The parent/guardian will complete a form which

will provide:

- Details of the incident
- Information on the school's response to the incident
- Details of the complaints process followed by the school and parent

Step 3. Focus of Review Group

The review group will examine:

- Was restraint used? Did the use of restraint comply with the published Guidelines?
 - If deemed necessary a representative from the review group will engage further with both school and/or the parent/guardian

Step 5. Final Correspondence

The Department will send written confirmation of the outcome to both the parent and the school. If the parent remains dissatisfied, the correspondence will also provide information on other possible avenues, such as: Tusla; Ombudsman for Children; Teaching Council



Step 2. Department Follow-Up with School

The school will be asked to confirm:

- How they addressed the incident
- How they followed the complaints process
- The rationale for their outcome

Step 4. Determination of Outcome Following the review:

If the school followed the correct process:

- The Department will inform the parent and confirm this finding with the school

If the school did not follow the correct process:

- The Department will outline the shortcomings to the school
- The Department will ensure the school understands where errors occurred
- Training from the NCSE may be offered