

Physical Interventions and Restraints Policy

2025 - 2026

‘Because Children Deserve Better’

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1. Aims

This policy sets out Pivot's approach to physical interventions, including restrictive interventions, to maintain a safe and supportive environment. It explains the legal framework, the principles that govern decision-making, and the expectations for recording, reporting and reviewing practice.

We will always seek to prevent escalation through relational and proactive strategies. Any physical intervention must be necessary, reasonable and proportionate, be the least restrictive option available, use the minimum force for the shortest time, and preserve the learner's dignity and safety.

2. Legislation and guidance

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, and Department for Education guidance on [restrictive interventions and reasonable force in schools](#) (April 2026), enables Pivot staff to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a learner from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- committing any offence (or, for a learner under the age of criminal responsibility, what would be an offence for an older learner)
- causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of any person (including themselves)
- prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at Pivot settings or among any learners receiving education at Pivot, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

The statutory power conferred by Section 93 is in addition to the common law power to use reasonable force in self-defence, to prevent injury, or to prevent a criminal offence. There is no single legal definition of when force is 'reasonable'; each case must be judged on its individual circumstances. Staff must take account of a learner's age, understanding, communication needs, and any special educational needs and/or disability, and must be able to justify their decision-making.

DfE guidance and the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 are clear that reasonable force must not be used as a punishment. Force may be used to search for and confiscate prohibited items where the law permits; it must not be used to enforce compliance with school rules where there is no immediate safety or serious order risk (see Screening, Searching and Confiscation Policy).

Who can use reasonable force?

The staff to which this power applies are defined in Section 95 of the Act as:

- All members of Pivot staff have a legal power to use reasonable force.
- It can also apply to people whom the Headteacher has temporarily put in charge of learners such as agency staff (with appropriate training)

The types of force which are deemed to be reasonable

- Passive physical contact resulting from standing between two learners or blocking a learner's path
- Active physical contact such as leading a learner by the hand or arm; ushering a

learner away by placing a hand in the centre of their back; or, in more extreme circumstances, using appropriate restrictive holds

Other physical contact with learners

The Department for Education says that it is not illegal to touch a learner and that there are occasions when physical contact with a learner is 'proper and necessary'.

Examples of where touching a learner might be proper or necessary include:

- Holding the hand of the child
- When comforting a distressed learner
- When congratulating or praising a learner
- When demonstrating physical skills e.g., musical instrument, during PE lessons, handwriting
- When giving first aid

Minimising the need to use force

Use of force is only used as a last resort and procedures are in place in Pivot provisions to create a calm and orderly environment within a supportive school climate that lessens the risk and threat of violence of any kind. Effective relationships are developed between staff and learners. Personal, Social, Health Education and Zones of Regulation activities support learners in managing conflict and coping with feelings. Staff are also given guidance and training in how to support learner behaviour.

3. Physical interventions

At Pivot we define a physical intervention as any use of physical contact by staff that is intended to support a learner's safety or prevent harm when they are escalating towards crisis. This ranges from low-level guiding and prompting touch through to restrictive physical holds. The decision to physically intervene is a professional judgement based on an immediate dynamic risk assessment, and must consider the risk to the learner, other learners, staff, and property.

Restrictive intervention is any intervention that limits a learner's movement, liberty or freedom of action (for example, physical restraint, seclusion, or blocking a route).

A significant incident / significant use of force is any incident where staff use force beyond everyday 'proper and necessary' contact, including any restrictive intervention (e.g. any physical restraint, any seclusion, any ground hold, or any situation where a learner is prevented from leaving an area).

Significant incidents must be recorded on Arbor and reported in line with Section 6 of this policy.

Staff are trained in Team Teach techniques. Each site has Team Teach Advanced Practitioners. Four-person holds, including any ground hold, must only be used where there is an immediate and serious risk of harm and no safer, less restrictive option is available. They must be authorised by an Advanced Practitioner, Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher, who should attend promptly and oversee the intervention where it is safe to do so.

4. Restraints

Restraint means to hold back physically or to support a learner to safety using appropriate physical intervention. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances and is always in response to a safety concern. Staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in some cases, it may not always be possible to avoid injuries.

Ground holds (four-person) are an emergency intervention and must only be used where there is an immediate and serious risk of harm and no safer, less restrictive option is available. They must be authorised and overseen in line with Section 3 and are always treated as a significant incident requiring full recording on Arbor and reporting as set out in Section 6.

What to do in circumstances when the use of physical restraint is needed

- Staff should not hesitate to act *in a necessary, reasonable and proportionate manner* provided they follow the guidelines in this policy.
- Where possible, the consequences of refusing to stop the behaviour should be explained and it should be communicated to the learner that physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary.
- A calm and measured approach to the learner is required by staff.
- In any application of physical restraint, the minimum reasonable force should be used to calm down the situation.
- Following a restraint, learners should be closely monitored by a member of staff and where applicable, checked by a first aider once the situation is safe to do so.

5. Seclusion

At Pivot we work on nurture and relational principles. We do not use seclusion as a planned strategy, and we do not have dedicated seclusion rooms. We do have low arousal areas that learners can access or be supported to access when they are feeling overwhelmed.

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention where a learner is kept away from others and is not free to leave. Seclusion must only ever be used as an emergency safety measure to prevent immediate harm where other strategies have not reduced risk, and it must never be threatened or used as a sanction. The space must be safe and non-threatening, the learner must be continuously supervised, and they must be allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced.

A learner choosing to use, or being supported to use, a low arousal area is not seclusion if they remain free to leave. If staff actions (directly or indirectly) prevent a learner from leaving, this becomes seclusion and must be recorded and reported as such. It is considered seclusion when:

- Staff restrict a learner's movement (e.g., blocking an exit or standing in the way)
- A learner is told they cannot leave
- A learner believes they will be stopped or punished if they try to leave
- Staff actions create an implied expectation that the learner must remain

Examples include:

- Directing a dysregulated learner into a room and preventing exit
- Closing a door to contain a learner
- All other learners are asked to leave a space, and the dysregulated learner remains and they are prevented from leaving
- Using any space to contain a learner to reduce immediate risk

Any incidents of seclusion:

- Must only be used to prevent immediate harm
- Must be continuously supervised
- Must end as soon as the risk reduces
- Must be recorded and reported to parents in line with this policy

6. Recording and reporting

Following an incident that required physical intervention, staff should consider what and how this information needs recording and reporting depending on the type of intervention. This should be in accordance with this policy.

Recording Incidents

Everyday 'proper and necessary' physical contact (for example, gentle guiding to support safety) should be noted in routine behaviour logs where this provides helpful context.

All significant incidents (including any restraint or any seclusion) must be reported to the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team as soon as possible and no later than the end of the same working day.

Significant incidents must be recorded on Arbor (Pivot MIS) by adding a physical intervention to the behaviour incident log. Staff must complete the relevant record (Appendix 2 for restraint; Appendix 3 for seclusion) and attach it to the Arbor log.

Where an incident meets the definition of seclusion (including where a low arousal area is used but the learner is not free to leave), it must be recorded on Arbor using the Seclusion record (Appendix 3) and escalated to SLT as above.

Informing others

After a significant incident (including any restraint, any seclusion, or any ground hold), the following people must be informed within 24 hours of the incident. Leaders should prioritise these conversations and we would strive for them to happen on the same day.

- Parent/carers: telephone call where possible, plus written notification via Arbor email. Where Dojo is used by the setting, a Dojo message may also be sent to support timely communication. The incident must be fully recorded on Arbor (including the relevant appendix form) to evidence that parents/carers have been informed.
- Where the learner has a social worker: notify by telephone where possible and email via Arbor, and ensure this is recorded within the Arbor incident log.
- Where the learner is Looked After: notify the social worker, corporate parent (children's social care) and the Head of the Virtual School by telephone where

possible and email via Arbor and record the notifications within the Arbor incident log.

The Headteacher (or delegated SLT member) is responsible for ensuring parent/carer notification is completed and recorded. Where immediate contact cannot be made, further attempts must be logged on Arbor until successful.

Post incident support

Care is taken after an incident to ensure both staff and learners are supported including meeting immediate medical needs, rebuilding relationships and reflecting on the incident so that lessons can be learned. These restorative conversations should be documented in an appropriate way and included as part of the incident report on Arbor for learners. Staff should have a separate conversation with a senior member of staff using the form in appendix 1 and these should be forwarded to HR and filed in their personnel files. Headteachers notify the Directors of incidents, and Directors monitor incidents where physical restraint has been used and consider the implications, agreeing any necessary actions required.

Monitoring and review

Headteachers will review patterns and triggers of restrictive interventions, including any repeat use for an individual learner, and ensure plans, risk assessments and support strategies are updated. Directors will monitor incidents across settings to identify themes, training needs and any required changes to practice.

Complaints and allegations

If a complaint is made, it is considered in relation to Pivot's complaints procedure and guidance on dealing with allegations of abuse by staff. Further guidance is available in ['Use of Reasonable Force – Advice for Headteachers, Governing Bodies and Staff'](#) - DfE document.

7. Staff training

All staff working with learners are expected to be trained in Team Teach Positive Behaviour Training: Level 2 as a minimum and each academy will have staff who are trained in Advanced Modules or hold Intermediate or Advanced trainer certificates. It is an expectation that new staff complete this training during their probation period if they do not hold a valid certificate.

Staff also receive further targeted training throughout their employment to support them to work effectively with our learners.

8. Linked policies

This behaviour policy is linked to the following policies:

- Suspension and Permanent Exclusions Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Child-on-Child Abuse Policy
- Screening, Searching and Confiscation Policy
- Behaviour Policy



9. Appendix 1: Staff follow up meeting RPE form

Staff name:	Date:
Incident date:	SLT initials:
How are you feeling following the incident?	
Have you been injured? Yes / No (please circle) If yes, how did the injury occur?	
If yes, have you recorded it? (please highlight) On Arbor On the RPI Form	
What do you think could be implemented to avoid this happening again in the future?	
How would you rate the effectiveness of the support offered during the incident? Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you need any further support after this incident?	
SLT notes from meeting:	
Staff signature:	Full name:
SLT signature:	Full name:

Once completed please return to HR.



10. Appendix 2: Restraint record sheet

Restraint record sheet					
Please complete all sections of the form following a restraint. Once complete attach to the relevant Arbor incident entry. If you need help with completing it, please see the Pastoral and Welfare Lead in your setting.					
Seen by Headteacher (initials):		Date:			
Learner's name:		Class:		Date:	
		Time:		Length of restraint:	
Place/activity:					
Staff involved:					
Witnesses:					
Describe the lead up to the incident, include all de-escalation techniques you have used.					
What did you try to do to avoid the restraint?					
De-escalation (tick any strategies you used)					
Verbal advice and support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diversion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Time out - offered	<input type="checkbox"/>
Firm clear directions	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reassurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Time out - directed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Zones of Regulation toolbox	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tactical ignoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reminder of consequences	<input type="checkbox"/>
Limited choices	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prompt touch	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reminders of success	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distraction	<input type="checkbox"/>	Take-up time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Others:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reason for restraint: to prevent a pupil from doing or continuing to do					
Committing a criminal offense	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Damage to property (including their own)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Injury to self or others	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline	<input type="checkbox"/>
What happened following de-escalation: (include your dynamic risk assessment)					



Physical intervention strategies: (Tick any strategies which you used)			
Shepherd/steering		Friendly escort (Two person)	
Help hug/sideways hug		Single elbow (Two person)	
Beanbag		Figure of four (Two person)	
Double-elbow		Double-elbow (Two person)	
Half shield		Sitting friendly escort (Two person)	
Full shield		Ground Hold (Four Person)	
Injuries: (the first questions in each column must be completed)			
Learner checked for injuries by a member of staff? Yes No		Injury to staff? Yes No	
Any injuries noted? Yes No		Name of staff injured:	
Description of injury:		Type of injury:	
Referred to first aider?		Name of staff injured:	
Name of first aider:		Type of injury:	
Treatment given (if applicable)		Treatment given (if applicable)	
Follow up to incident:			
Access to low arousal space		Returned to class	Completed missed work
SENCO informed		Debrief with child	Other:
Parents/carers informed by:			
Phone call by (name):		Letter sent by (name):	Face to face by (name):
Email sent via Arbor by (name):		Electronic Message sent by:	Other, please specify:
Other relevant paperwork completed/updated (tick all applicable):			
Arbor Entry	Positive Handling Plan	Behaviour Monitoring Sheet	Other:
First Aid Log	Individual Pupil Risk Assessment	Restorative conversations record	
Staff signature:		Date:	



11. Appendix 3: Seclusion record sheet

Seclusion record sheet			
Please complete all sections of the form following a seclusion. Once complete attach to the relevant Arbor incident entry. If you need help with completing it, please see the Pastoral and Welfare Lead in your setting.			
Seen by Headteacher (initials):	Date:		
Learner's name:	Class:	Date:	
	Time:	Length of seclusion:	
Place/activity:			
Staff involved:			
Witnesses:			
Describe the lead up to the incident, include all de-escalation techniques you have used.			
What did you try to do to avoid the seclusion?			
De-escalation (tick any strategies you used)			
Verbal advice and support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diversion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Firm clear directions	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reassurance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Zones of Regulation toolbox	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tactical ignoring	<input type="checkbox"/>
Limited choices	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prompt touch	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distraction	<input type="checkbox"/>	Take-up time	<input type="checkbox"/>
			Time out - offered <input type="checkbox"/>
			Time out - directed <input type="checkbox"/>
			Reminder of consequences <input type="checkbox"/>
			Reminders of success <input type="checkbox"/>
			Others: <input type="checkbox"/>
Reason for seclusion: to prevent a pupil from doing or continuing to do			
Committing a criminal offense	<input type="checkbox"/>	Damage to property (including their own)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Injury to self or others	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline	<input type="checkbox"/>
What happened following de-escalation: (include your dynamic risk assessment)			



Physical intervention strategies: (Tick any strategies which you used)			
Shepherd/steering		Friendly escort (Two person)	
Help hug/sideways hug		Single elbow (Two person)	
Beanbag		Figure of four (Two person)	
Double-elbow		Double-elbow (Two person)	
Half shield		Sitting friendly escort (Two person)	
Full shield		Ground Hold (Four Person)	
Injuries: (the first questions in each column must be completed)			
Learner checked for injuries by a member of staff? Yes No		Injury to staff? Yes No	
Any injuries noted? Yes No		Name of staff injured:	
Description of injury:		Type of injury:	
Referred to first aider?		Name of staff injured:	
Name of first aider:		Type of injury:	
Treatment given (if applicable)		Treatment given (if applicable)	
Follow up to incident:			
Access to low arousal space	Returned to class	Completed missed work	
SENCO informed	Debrief with child	Other:	
Parents/carers informed by:			
Phone call by (name):	Letter sent by (name):	Face to face by (name):	
Email sent via Arbor by (name):	Electronic Message sent by:	Other, please specify:	
Other relevant paperwork completed/updated (tick all applicable):			
Arbor Entry	Positive Handling Plan	Behaviour Monitoring Sheet	Other:
First Aid Log	Individual Pupil Risk Assessment	Restorative conversations record	
Staff signature:		Date:	