



# Phoenix College

## Use of Physical Interventions Policy

February 2026

**This policy refers to ‘the organisation’ throughout and in doing so is referring to Phoenix Autism Trust.**

## 1. Purpose and scope

The Principal has the responsibility to maintain the safety and wellbeing of the students and staff. This policy focuses on how we may use physical intervention with students, what processes we have in place to ensure we are recording and reporting all instances of physical intervention (PI) and how we are working to reduce its use.

This policy has been written considering the need to comply with the requirements of the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (revised 1998 edition), and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. It takes full account of the Equality Act 2010, the Children and Families Act 2014, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. It also complies with and supplements the relevant provisions of the Education Act 1996, Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the Government's directives to reduce school exclusions.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Adult at Risk Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Health & Safety Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy

## 2. The context

Phoenix College, requires all policy and practice to afford our students support with dignity, compassion and respect. Our approach is centred around improving the quality of life of our young people while they are in our settings and ensuring this quality of life continues into adulthood. It is based upon a person's indisputable rights to be:

- treated with dignity and compassion
- valued
- listened to
- supported to have the best quality of life possible
- empowered to make choices and decide on how they want to live their life.

A PI both planned and unplanned, can undermine dignity, respect and compassion and this policy has been written to significantly minimise its use and minimise the potential negative impacts.

Any PI interventions used must be carried out according to the principles and guidance as set out in our Team Teach training.

Only staff who are trained in physical intervention can use it. Where agency staff are employed, they are not allowed to physically intervene. The one exception to this rule is that staff can intervene and use reasonable force to prevent students from hurting themselves or others.

### **3. Our Principles**

- Phoenix College promotes a positive and supportive approach to behaviour, which provides the right support at the right time. We teach students new skills to minimise behaviour that challenges and seek for the young person to engage in these new skills because they improve their life/make life interesting/meaningful for them.
- We understand that behaviour that challenges has a communicative intent.
- Where a PI is required it will only be used as a last resort; where a learner is putting themselves or others at risk and all other non-restraints have proved to be unsuccessful. It must be reasonable, proportionate and necessary and must never be used as a punitive measure.
- At all times our staff will be committed to using ‘the least to most’ approach to physical intervention.
- Not all behaviour that challenges requires a PI. Staff must try proactive strategies in the first instance.
- Where staff use or observe a PI that causes them concern it is their duty to report this by following the processes set out in our safeguarding policies.
- We have a duty of care to ensure students and staff are kept safe.
- We are committed to making learning motivating and engaging. We carefully monitor attendance and put systems in place to support students and their families if attendance falls below the required target. This may include working with external agencies.

### **4. Terminology / Definitions**

A physical intervention is any use of force by a person or persons to control another person.

In this policy we define ‘behaviour that challenges’ as ‘behaviour of such intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety of the person or others is likely to be placed in serious jeopardy, or behaviour which is likely to seriously limit or delay access to and use of ordinary community facilities’

Any intervention aimed to deliberately punish a learner, or which is primarily intended to cause pain, injury or humiliation is unlawful and will be considered an act of gross misconduct. Examples of this include hitting, pushing, slapping, kicking, poking or prodding a learner. Staff who engage in any such act would render themselves liable for dismissal and being referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

## 5. The importance of the environment

Students needs are either fulfilled or frustrated by their environment. The environment can serve to nurture and enrich, and facilitate development, but can also disrupt and thwart, leading to less optimal development, disharmony, defiance, developmental regression or alienation. All of which can lead to behaviours that challenge. Meeting learner's needs removes the need to employ physical intervention. The Phoenix College approach involves attending to physical and psychological needs by:

- *Employing impactful, high quality teaching.* Our teachers:
  - engage in high quality instruction
  - create a classroom climate that has high expectations whilst recognising and promoting students' self-worth
  - have enhanced pedagogical knowledge relating to autism.
  
- *Meeting physical needs.* Our staff monitor:
  - hunger or tiredness or feeling unsafe
  - over stimulation
  - under stimulation.
  
- *Meeting psychological needs.* Our staff promote:
  - **Autonomy:** Creating as many opportunities as possible for students to exercise the need for autonomy and limiting, as far as possible, practices that undermine autonomy. They also build students capacity and tolerance to manage situations where autonomy is limited.
  - **Competence:** Organising the environment and tasks so students can be effective in their interactions with the environment.
  - **Relatedness:** Developing and maintaining strong and supportive emotional bonds between staff and students.

## 6. Reducing the use of PIs

All interventions should be in accordance with students' individual behaviour support plans (BSPs); these are reviewed termly and updated ad-hoc as necessary. The desired outcome of our approach is that over time students' skills and quality of life will increase and inversely the rate of challenging behaviour will decrease. Physical interventions will be systematically faded out as determined by data and monitoring.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring minimal rates of physical intervention. We gather and report on data termly around the use of physical interventions to the Board of Trustees

## **7. Assessing the need for and the conduct of physical intervention**

A physical intervention must only be used when it is absolutely necessary. The intervention used must be reasonable and proportionate to the challenging behaviour observed and considered necessary to prevent a student from significantly injuring themselves or others, causing serious damage to property or breaking the law. There are also occasions when the behaviour is unmanageable in the area or environment that the student is in and would be better managed in a quieter area.

Any P.I. should

- Be non-aversive,
- Be for the shortest amount of time possible
- Use the least amount of force necessary.
- Be in the best interest of the student and NEVER for the convenience of the staff or because staff have become frustrated or short of time.
- Be carried out by staff trained in Team Teach methods.
- Be an agreed and taught restraint, that is designed to ensure that the student is safe and the adult member is calm.
- Be carried out swiftly and calmly so the student does not become more stressed
- Be led by one person and language kept to a minimum.
- Include the use of visuals to support the student when calming down.

### **Planned use of PI's**

Where a student is at risk of harming themselves or others and is deemed to have diminished situational mental capacity, appropriate physical intervention will be carried out.

A planned physical intervention must be written in the student's behaviour support plan and be agreed by all staff. If one is in place, an updated version of the BSP should be shared with the student and their family at the end of each term.

Wherever possible, the student should be involved planning for the potential physical support/intervention that can be used if and when their behaviour presents a risk to them or others.

In the planned use of PI's:

- Challenging behaviour is identified
- Functional Analysis of the behaviour is completed e.g. S.T.A.R. chart.
- A risk assessment and Behaviour Support Plan is written and agreed by the team working with the student.
- The Behaviour Support Plan will contain clearly identifiable de-escalation and preventative strategies to use with the student in order to reduce the need of using a PI.
- The plan is always communicated to the parents and a copy sent home
- All members of staff involved with the student must be informed of the agreed plan.

- An electronic copy of the BSP is kept in the student's file on the server and an up to date paper copy is kept in the 'class folder' with the class team.
- If PI is necessary as part of the plan, only staff who have taken part in Team Teach training can carry out the PI.
- Every PI **MUST** be recorded on DatabridgeMIS.
- The Behaviour Support Plan must be reviewed regularly and amended if necessary.
- Visuals must be used to support the student.

### **Unplanned use of PI's**

An unplanned physical intervention must only be used once, where a dynamic risk assessment of an unforeseen crisis, has shown that there is a danger to the student or to other staff or students around them, which cannot be managed in a less intrusive way and that a PI is the reasonable, proportionate and necessary action to be taking. In this event all members of staff have a duty of care to ensure the safety of the student, which may mean a PI has to be used. From then on the PI must be planned for and written into a behaviour support plan.

In the unplanned use of PIs:

- Any emergency use of PI must be in line with the Team Teach philosophy and comply with basic health and safety regulations as stated in the behaviour policy.
- Any staff and student involved must be allowed time to recover.
- Check and treat any injuries.
- Record on DatabridgeMIS and report back to relevant members of staff.
- Parents must be notified by phone or letter and a record of this recorded on DatabridgeMIS
- A BSP must be written directly after an unplanned PI to prevent the risk of this happening again

## **8. Recording a Physical Interventions**

All physical interventions should be recorded, by the staff member involved, on DatabridgeMIS. Staff must report any incidents to class tutors. Incidents of challenging behaviour will also be reported to parents where appropriate and relevant, taking into account any issues related to student well-being at home.

## **9. Debriefing**

De-briefing after an incident is essential in supporting staff and students to learn from the experience and use it to inform best practice. Staff are provided with opportunities to debrief with appropriate members of staff from across the College team. Debriefs with staff occur after any incident. This can be on an individual basis or as a part of a team, and may be utilised to inform decisions on changes to existing Behaviour Support Plans or Risk Assessments or identify where training/support for staff may be needed.

Students are also given appropriate debriefs after an incident, so they are supported to understand the situation that has just occurred. This may take place through talking about the incident with a

trusted member of staff, or for some students, the use of social stories or other supportive communication aids.

There should be a clear delineation between debriefing for emotional purposes and debriefing for business purposes e.g. to learn lessons from an event

## **10. Monitoring and Reviewing Systems**

DatabridgeMIS data will be reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Principal. He/she will alert a Team Teach trainer when either a planned or unplanned restraint has been used. It is the responsibility of this person to check that (1) this has been recorded appropriately on the PI log, and (2) to check that the BSP / Risk Assessment where an unplanned RPI was utilised has been updated, or guidelines provided are demonstrated to not meet the students' needs.

All incidents logged on Databridge are reviewed and analysed by the safeguarding team at the monthly safeguarding meeting to ensure the following:

- PI is being recorded when it has been used
- The PI log is completed with the appropriate information
- Interventions are used in an appropriate manner (i.e. where non-restraints have been unsuccessful in keeping the young person safe)
- To monitor the frequency of PIs; where there is an increasing trend in PI the class teacher must review the Behaviour Support Plan accordingly.

## **11. Communicating with Parents/Carers**

Parental/carer views are considered for the individual young persons' behaviour plan which specifies the techniques to be used with their young person. Parents/carers have a right to know when a PI is used and accordingly will be sent home notification of when any unplanned restrictive intervention occurs or if any injury occurs. They will also be offered an opportunity to discuss a PI and any on-going behaviour management strategies that are being adopted with their son/daughter's class teacher.

## **12. Training**

It is important that all staff are autism confident. They need to be deemed competent and confident to do their job well.

- All staff will receive autism training, safeguarding training and physical intervention training (Team Teach).
- All staff will take part in regular refreshers and workshops in the appropriate use of PI
- All staff will have training in recording RPIs in DatabridgeMIS.