

Physical Restraint Policy

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd

1. Policy Statement

At Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd, we are committed to providing a safe, supportive, and respectful environment for all participants. Physical restraint will **only be used as a last resort** to prevent harm to a child, another person, or serious damage to the environment or equipment.

Our approach prioritises:

- Prevention
- De-escalation
- Positive behaviour support

Physical restraint will **never be used as punishment, discipline, or to enforce compliance.**

2. Definition of Physical Restraint

Physical restraint refers to **any direct physical contact intended to prevent, restrict, or subdue a participant's movement.**

This may include:

- Holding a child to prevent them running into danger
- Guiding or blocking movement to prevent harm
- Separating individuals involved in a physical conflict

This does **not** include appropriate supportive contact such as:

- Helping a child balance on uneven ground
 - Administering first aid
 - Providing comfort or reassurance.
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3. Principles

Staff will follow these principles when responding to challenging behaviour:

1. **Safety First** – Protect all participants, staff, and the public.
2. **Minimum Force** – Use the least restrictive intervention necessary.

3. **Last Resort** – Physical restraint only used after other strategies fail.
 4. **Shortest Time Possible** – Restraint ends as soon as risk reduces.
 5. **Dignity and Respect** – Children must be treated respectfully at all times.
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4. Situations Where Physical Restraint May Be Used

Physical restraint may be used when a participant:

- Is at **immediate risk of harming themselves**
- Is at **immediate risk of harming another person**
- Is attempting to **run into significant environmental danger** (e.g., roads, water hazards, fire areas)
- Is **seriously damaging equipment or the environment** in a way that could cause injury

Forest School environments contain natural hazards such as:

- Fire circles
- Tools
- Uneven terrain
- Water features

These risks may require staff to intervene quickly to prevent injury.

5. Prevention and De-Escalation

Staff will aim to prevent situations escalating by:

- Clear behaviour expectations
- Risk assessments
- Appropriate staff-to-child ratios
- Calm verbal communication
- Distraction and redirection
- Providing space or time away from group activity
- Offering choices

Staff are encouraged to **identify early warning signs** of distress or frustration.

6. Acceptable Physical Interventions

If restraint is unavoidable, staff may:

- Stand between a child and a hazard
- Guide a child away from danger using an open hand
- Hold a child's arm or shoulders to stop immediate harm
- Separate children in a physical altercation

Staff must **avoid positions that:**

- Restrict breathing
 - Put pressure on the chest, neck, or joints
 - Cause pain or distress
 - Force a child to the ground unless absolutely necessary for safety
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7. Staff Training

All staff must:

- Receive **safeguarding training**
- Understand behaviour management procedures
- Be aware of this restraint policy

Where possible, staff should receive training in **safe physical intervention techniques** appropriate to outdoor education environments.

8. Recording and Reporting

Any use of physical restraint must be recorded as soon as possible and include:

- Date and time
- Location
- People involved
- Reason for restraint
- Type of intervention used
- Duration
- Outcome
- Any injuries

Parents or carers should be informed **on the same day wherever possible**.

Incidents should also be reviewed to identify learning or preventative measures.

9. Safeguarding Considerations

Physical restraint must always be carried out in accordance with the organisation's **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**.

If a child discloses distress or injury following restraint, the incident must be reported to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (Dan Halford)**.

10. Post-Incident Support

After any restraint:

- The child should be supported to **calm and recover**
 - Staff should discuss the incident in a **non-judgemental way**
 - Staff involved may receive a **debrief**
 - Risk assessments and behaviour strategies should be reviewed
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11. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed **annually** or following any significant incident

Policy reviewed January 2026- Kate Morison – Lead Practitioner- no alternations made.