

Bord Oideachais & Oiliúna  
**LUIMNIGH & AN CHLÁIR**

**LIMERICK & CLARE**  
Education & Training Board

# Safety Interventions Policy: Staff Response to Crisis Situations

Policy Area	Child Protection/ H&S
Version	1.0
Date	Created: May 2025
Monitored	Every 3 years
Responsibility	Principal
Approval	Director of Schools / Single Manager
This policy document is an uncontrolled copy. Each staff member should consult StaffCONNECT for the latest version of this document.	



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## SECTION 1 – Relationship to School’s Mission Statement

Limerick Community Special School (LCSS) is a co-educational, multi-denominational special school which is underpinned by the core values of excellence in education, care, equality, community and respect.

In Limerick Community Special School, we are dedicated to helping each student to achieve their individual potential. The school policies are central to ensuring the provision of quality education through a holistic manner in a safe environment.

Our school promotes a neuro-affirmative and strengths-based approach to meet the needs of all children in the school, particularly in relation to children who present with behaviours of concern.

A Safety Interventions Policy explains the use of physical restraint. These include both safety disengagements and safety holds.

Physical Restraint is defined as: *Physical restraint is any procedure where one or more adults restrict a student’s physical movement or normal access to his or her own body. It is an intervention used in crisis situations when not to do so could result in serious physical harm or injury to the student or others.* (Understand Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations 2024 p.42)

In Limerick Community Special School, Physical restraint is always considered a last resort and for the purpose of protecting a child's wellbeing and the wellbeing of others, it is always the least restrictive approach possible, for the shortest period possible and proportionate to the risk of harm from the behaviour of concern.

This Safety Interventions Policy has been developed by the management of Limerick Community Special School to ensure that the needs and rights of students and staff are maintained and that the highest standards of best practice are always ensured around physical restraint. School staff have completed or are due to complete the the CPI Safety Intervention Foundation Course.

This policy has been reviewed in conjunction with our Code of Behaviour Policy. Our school in the first instance applies the principles outlined in our Code of Behaviour Policy which provide guidelines to staff on how to meet the needs of individual students creating a safe physical and emotional environment that is responsive to the needs of all.

*“All behaviours of concern signal a need for empathic support in the context of good student/adult relationships alongside individualised responses based on systematic data gathering and identification of student need. It is advisable when providing individualised support that staff access relevant CPD” (Understand Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations 2024 p.29)*

## SECTION 2 – Legal Framework

The policy is based on guidance from the following:

- Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations: Guidelines for Schools in supporting students, Department of Education, December 2024
- Education and Welfare Act 2000
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) (Amendment) Regulations 2007 (as well as other statutes and standards)
- Children First Guidelines 2011
- Department of Education Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017
- Guidelines for Schools on Supporting Students with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties - An information guide for Primary Schools: DES 2013
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- NCSE (2015) Policy advice paper No. 5: Supporting children with ASD in schools

- Mental Health Commission (2010) Code of Practice: Guidance for persons working in mental health services with people with intellectual disabilities.
- Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) (2016). Guidance for designated centres on restraint procedures (2014, updated 2016).

### SECTION 3 – Aims

- To provide clear guidelines to staff, student/students and parents/guardians regarding the use of physical restraint in our school, including the use of time out of class and withdrawal from class.
- To create a culture within the school where there is minimal use of physical restraint, where any physical restraint is used: the least restrictive possible, used for the shortest duration possible and proportionate to the presenting risks.
- To promote the children's development of effective relationships, emotional regulation and interpersonal skills.
- To develop individual proactive and reactive strategies that will reduce the likelihood of risk behaviours occurring and manage its impact on the child/others if/when they do occur.
- To ensure that parent(s)/guardian(s) are consulted and consent to the ways in which their child's behaviour is supported while at school.
- To adopt and maintain a connection and regulation first environment, a focus on each child's sensory needs, a total communication approach, a consistent and predictable environment, a low arousal approach throughout the school, keeping the environment as calm as possible.
- To manage serious incidents if they occur.
- To reduce the risks associated with serious incidents such as injuries to the student themselves, injuries to other students, injuries to staff or injuries to visitors to school.

## SECTION 4 – PREVENTION

Limerick community special school endeavors to create a neuro-affirmative environment where highly effective learning and teaching can take place.

All staff will strive to create a communication friendly, predictable and consistent environment for all students.

Limerick Community Special School views behaviour through the lens of the biopsychosocial model. This means all behaviour is purposeful and meaningful and is a result of the interaction between different contexts i.e. biological, psychological and social contexts and systems.

Using Shanker's self-regulation framework, behaviours of concern can be viewed as a reaction to stressors within 5 domains – Biological, emotional, cognitive, social and pro-social The Self-Reg Framework: The Five Domains of Stress - Self-Reg

Students with an identified need will have targets in relation to Behaviour in their Student Support Plan (SSP). These targets will emphasise the development of desirable behaviours rather than the suppression or elimination of undesirable ones.

The school seeks in the first instance to be proactive at all times to prevent and minimise the need for physical restraint employing a low arousal approach, Shanker's self-regulation framework. School practice is underpinned by the Wellbeing Promotion Indicators of Success, in order to promote a whole school approach to improving educational outcomes for students in LCSS.

### **Wellbeing Promotion Indicators of Success**

#### 1. Culture and Environment

- Students feel and experience a sense of connection, belonging and safety
- The environment has been audited, designed and adapted to meet the sensory needs of the students
- A consistent and predictable environment is created and maintained by teachers/SNA's
- Complete environmental audit and adjust to meet the individual needs of the student this may include list below which is not exhaustive
- Adjustments: Individual workstation, access to preferred activities where possible, access to preferred or skilled staff where possible, timetables organised to minimise risks, individual schedules, reduced student/staff ratios, comfort areas, sensory room, opportunities provided to calm or burn off energy.
- Low-arousal approach is promoted throughout the school.
- Reducing demands and requests

- Avoiding potentially arousing triggers such as touch, direct eye contact, and spectators
  - Avoiding non-verbal behaviours such as hostile postures or stances
2. Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)
- Students experience positive, high-quality teaching, learning and assessment.
  - Students experience playful and engaging meaningful learning experiences.
  - Students' sensory needs are met through a regulation first environment and approach
3. Policy and Planning
- The whole school policy is focused on overall well-being promotion.
  - A Total Communication approach is employed across the school.
  - Policy and Planning is underpinned by regulation first principle and the Self-Regulation Framework
    - Read the signs of stress and **reframe** the behaviour
    - 2. **Recognize** the stressors
    - 3. **Reduce** the stress
    - 4. **Reflect**: enhance stress awareness
    - 5. **Restore** energy
4. Relationships and Partnerships
- All adults in the school have an increased awareness of wellbeing promotion
  - Trauma informed practice is a key principle of pedagogy
  - Building warm, secure relationships is a core principle of the school
  - De-escalation is utilized by staff to prevent crisis situations. The CPI crisis Development model emphasizes therapeutic rapport post incident repairing and restoring relationships.
  - As a school staff are trained in using CPI Crisis Development model both Supportive and Directive techniques are used to de-escalate a crisis
  - Other examples of de-escalation are outlined in the table below:

**Common de-escalation techniques include:**

Active listening.

Acknowledging what the student is experiencing emotionally.

Reducing the communication load on the student.

Using a preferred mode of communication by the student, e.g. objects of reference, choice board, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

Physical redirection to an alternative activity.

Problem solving if appropriate (if the student is able).

Offering clear simple choices, which would include self-regulation options.

Allowing adequate personal space.

Adopting non-threatening body language such as hands by your sides or in pockets.

Avoiding direct or sustained eye contact in most cases.

Going to an alternative space with the student that is less stimulating or which removes access to the triggers.

- **P.36 of Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations**

**SECTION 5 – STUDENT SUPPORT PLAN and RISK ASSESSMENTS**

**Student Support Plans are devised by teaching staff with input from the Principal or Deputy Principal, SNA's, students, parents and HSE CDNT and/or HSE CAMHS ID Team (where available) or any other clinician involved for students presenting with behaviours of concern, that may require safety interventions. Prevention and de-escalation strategies individual to each student will be included as the first response in the student support plan.**

**Risk Assessment for behaviour of concern will be provided by school management. This risk assessment is the Decision-Making Matrix Chart from Crisis Prevention Institute.**



## SECTION 6 –STAFF TRAINING

The school uses the CPI (Crisis Prevention Institute) Crisis Development Model to support students who present with behaviours of concern. CPI guiding philosophy is based on care, welfare, safety and security.

The Board of Management has funded the training of one staff member as a CPI Tutor to deliver training to staff, *CPI Safety Intervention Foundation*, which will be applied consistently throughout the school. An extra staff member has been trained as a tutor by the NCSE.

School staff have completed or are due to complete the CPI Safety Intervention Foundation Course.

Other training to be offered to staff include as available/required:

- Training for teachers provided by NCSE
- Training provided by the Middletown Centre for Autism
- Training provided by HSE CDNT Teams
- Participation by teachers in online and face to face courses during the summer
- Teachers attend seminars, conferences and workshops, approved by Principal/Deputy Principal
- Participation in the NCSE Relate Model for Explore

## SECTION 7– Physical contact in school

**There are many times when physical contact is used in Limerick Community Special School. This is not physical restraint. Examples of physical contact can be seen in the Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations, Department of Education, December 2024 (p. 29)**

Physical contact between staff and students related to wellbeing and education including communication, can play a critical role in this process and for some students it will be proper and necessary<sup>2</sup>.

### **Skill development**

- Guiding a student's hand to the correct position to write/play a musical instrument.
- Guiding a student to use/engage with their preferred mode of communication.
- Physically supporting a student to attempt something new e.g., climbing, balancing.
- Teaching independent life skills.
- Physically demonstrating a safe way to perform a task during physical education e.g., coaching instruction/adaptation.

### **Wellbeing**

- Providing First Aid.
- A helping hand when a student has fallen over.
- Gently leading a student away from a dangerous situation.
- Redirecting a student's attention to a different activity or topic.
- A high five, fist bump or handshake to acknowledge achievement.
- Arm around the shoulder, pat on top of arm, back or shoulder to give reassurance.
- Holding hands to accompany somewhere e.g., back or front of the assembly line.

### **Personal Care**

- To aid and assist in personal care particularly if prescribed for functional mobility, positioning, hygiene, nutrition and safety.
- Helping to change clothes or use the toilet.
- Using aids and safety equipment e.g., hoists, slings, harnesses, transfer belts and boards, protective helmets to prevent/lessen the impact of self-harm.

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<sup>2</sup> Such contact must always be in line with the principles of safeguarding and child protection

SECTION 8 - GUIDELINES ON THE USE OF PHYSICAL RESTRAINT

*“Physical restraint is not permitted within any recognised school setting except in a crisis situation where there is imminent risk to students’ physical safety or the safety of others. Physical restraint must not be used to punish a student for unacceptable behaviour under any circumstances. Physical restraint is any procedure where one or more adults restrict a student’s physical movement or normal access to his or her own body. It is an intervention used in crisis situations when not to do so could result in serious physical harm or injury to the student or others.”*

(Understand Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations 2024 p.42)

Physical Restraint

- Physical restraint in Limerick Community Special School is only used in the context of safety interventions as covered in CPI Safety Intervention Foundation Course 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.
- The following safety interventions are covered by CPI training in Limerick Community Special School. CPI Training delivered is documented and kept on record on tutor dashboard.

Disengagement Skills	Individual Holding Skills (1 staff member)	Team Interventions Holding Skills (2 staff members – Seated and Standing)
Strike (Block and Move)	Seated (low)	2 Staff Low
Wrist	Seated (medium)	2 staff medium
Clothing	Standing (low)	2 staff high
Hair	Standing (medium)	2 staff - Arms
Neck		Team Leader
Body		
Bite		

As per the Guidelines set out by the Department of Education all staff are aware that any use of physical restraint in Limerick Community Special School must be: Timely, Measured, Appropriate, Used by Trained Persons and Reviewed.

Staff will understand the risks of restraint as per the CPI Safety Intervention Foundation

Physical Restraint		
Should Always Be	Sometimes	Should Never Be
An act of care. For safety reasons. To manage behaviour in an emergency. Used with the least amount of force necessary for safety. For the shortest amount of time needed for the student to regain control.	Can lead to injury of the student or adults. Can lead to an increase in physical and emotional stress for student or adults. Can provoke a more intense physical reaction from the student or adults.	Punitive. Used unless the situation is an emergency and safety is compromised. Used as a teaching strategy.

(Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations, Department of Education, December 2024, p.43)

Course. Staff will always employ the Opt Out Sequence:

1. Can you **let you go**?
2. **Why** are you **holding** the person?
3. **What** are the **risks**?
4. **What** can be done to **reduce the risks**?

Prohibited practice

- **Seclusion:** Seclusion should not be used under any circumstances in any recognised school setting. Seclusion is placing a student involuntarily in any environment in which they are alone and physically prevented from leaving. Seclusion, however carried out, is always experienced by the student as punitive/punishment. It does not involve any agency on the part of the student. Physical prevention from leaving can be through the use of a locked door, a blocked door, or an exit held closed by a staff member. Seclusion is also a situation where a student believes they cannot leave a space although no physical block is evident.

## SECTION 9 – Debriefing and review post-crisis

The main actions to be taken in the immediate aftermath of the incident are Therapeutic Rapport and Debriefing/Recovery.

### Therapeutic Rapport

Teachers and SNA's will establish therapeutic rapport with student when the student is at Tension Reduction. The staff approach for this will be outlined in the Student Support Plan.

### Debriefing/ Recovery

Staff may need to take a break from the site of the incident to recover. This time may be afforded to them, particularly when dealing with a very stressful situation, by calling on support from their assigned support class, each class in the school has an assigned support class.

Support will be provided by senior management following a crisis incident through debriefing process. Debriefing will involve reviewing the incident and how to plan for the future in order to reduce the likelihood of future crisis behaviours and strengthen staff responses.

## SECTION 10 – Parent/Guardian Input

The school seeks to engage positively with parents/guardians regarding all aspects of their student's education, care and management. Parents/Guardians of students who engage in behaviours of concern are prioritised for meetings/phone calls with the Class Teacher, Deputy Principal or Principal. The school will endeavour to keep parents informed in a manner that is reasonable and in the best interests of the child. This will take the form of meetings, phone calls, email or Aladdin connect.

## SECTION 11 – Non-Physical Restraints: Use of Environmental Restraint

- In our school, because of the developing safety awareness of children and the necessity to maintain a safe environment for them, it is necessary to restrict the children's access to certain areas and their unsupervised exit from the building and school grounds. These environmental restraints reduce the needs for use of physical restraints. In this school, the following restrictions apply as standard practice, in order to provide a safe and calm learning environment for students:
  - Coded doors: school entrance/classroom doors, halla.
  - Gates at back of school are locked.

## SECTION 12 - Conclusions

### *Roles and Responsibilities*

All staff at Limerick Community Special School will take responsibility for implementing this policy.

### *Link to other policies*

This Policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies of the school e.g., Health and Safety Policy, Child Protection Policy, Safeguarding Statement, Code of Behaviour etc.

### *Timeframe for Implementation*

This Policy will commence in September 2025.

### *Timeframe for Review*


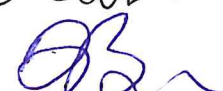
This policy will be reviewed in 6 months after ratification, after these every 3 years. Early review will be undertaken if feedback indicates that any aspect of the policy requires revising.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management

**Signed Chairperson Board of Management:**

Signed:

Principal

 19/6/25 -  
 19/6/25

**Next review date:** Jan 2026

<b>Appendix 1: Supporting Documents for Staff to Use (All available on Onedrive)</b>	
<b>FORM</b>	<b>CRITERIA</b>
Risk Assessment for behavior – Decision Making Matrix CPI	Filled out as assessment tool for risk behaviours to identify level of risk. Staff all have access to this Decision Making Matrix Chart, Displayed in each classroom.
Behaviour Log	Filled out and kept in class file on Aladdin for recording behaviours to have data to analyse Staff all have access to this Log, available on One Drive.
Behaviour Support Targets	Behaviour support targets are available in the student support file
Exit Plan	Classrooms may require an exit/evacuation plan. Class teacher to complete and share with class team including SNA's.
Whole School Emergency Plan	Class teacher to complete and SMT to share with all staff once reviewed.
Assault Procedures	Assault procedure for reporting if an assault occurs. All staff made aware of same.
Accident/ Near Miss form (LCETB)	This is filled out when someone has received an injury as a direct result of a behaviour of concern, when there has been a near miss of a significant incident that has the potential to be a risk to safety and/or significant damage to property. This form is filled out by staff and approved by the principal. It is kept on file as per LCETB guidelines for recording and keeping of information. The school refers it to HSA if the injured person is out of work for 3 or more consecutive days as a result of the injury. Staff all have access to this power app form on StaffConnect.

Debrief/Recovery Meeting	<p>The class team/ staff involved will meet that evening or prior to school to have a debrief meeting,</p> <p>Debrief questions will be available in each classroom for staff to reflect and plan for the school day.</p>
NCSE Record of Incident Involving Physical Restraint Form	<p>Document to be completed by relevant staff member with Deputy Principal. Form will be sent to NCSE by Deputy Principal.</p> <p>Copy of form will be saved to the Pupil File on tab in Aladdin.</p>