



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 V2: June 2026
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. Full time teaching and SNA staff have completed 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
- Circular 0042/2026 & Circular 0081/2024
- 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 and associated procedures and reporting forms.
- To create a culture within the school where there is minimal use of physical restraint, and where any physical restraint is used it is 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 preventative 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 regulation 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

- Maintaining a supportive stance and tone

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

- Every school policy is focused on overall wellbeing promotion.
- A Total Communication approach is employed across the school.
- Policy and Planning is underpinned by regulation first principle and the Self-Regulation Framework
 1. 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 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

Key to prevention of harm is staff supporting one another in crisis situations. A whole school alarm system is currently in place. Each staff member has a personal alarm with an assigned number. An alarm means **extreme risk**; A staff member or a child has been hurt **or** there is extreme risk that injury may occur and more staff are needed to keep people safe to help or a child is absconding from school. The following procedure is in place for responding to an alarm.

- The zone and sender will be displayed on screen
- The nearest person to the zone where the alarm goes off needs to go and help
- A member of Senior Management will always try to attend to an alarm.

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 where available HSE CDNT and/or HSE CAMHS ID Team 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 documented in behaviour support documents. The behaviour support documents are available on the Onedrive for teachers

to complete. Some classrooms may require an exit plan to ensure safety of staff and students in the room, this will be written by the teacher and shared with relevant staff members on the student support file on the OneDrive. A whole school emergency plan is required if a student has displayed behaviours of concern after the classroom has been exited and staff and students in communal areas are at risk of harm (moderate/major/catastrophic). 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.

Full time school staff have completed the CPI Safety Intervention Foundation Course. Training needs in relation to CPI will be reviewed annually by principal and CPI trained tutors in school.

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 Exploring School
- Education Therapy Service for Special Schools

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 necessary².

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.

² 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 3rd 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 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?

Procedure for Reporting Use of Physical Restraint

1. Where physical restraint has been used staff must report the incident to senior management (SMT).
2. The incident will be recorded by the teacher in the incident log (SSF).
3. The teacher or a member of the SMT will inform the parents that physical restraint was used.
4. Along with the staff members involved the Deputy Principal will complete the NCSE physical restraint reporting form.
5. The principal will sign all physical restraint reporting forms.
6. The physical restraint reporting form will be saved to the pupil's SSF.
7. The Board of Management will be informed by the Principal of the use of physical restraint and the number of crisis situations involving physical restraint in the school.
8. Once the Board of Management have been informed the physical restraint forms will be sent to the NCSE.

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, 2024, p.43)

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.

“Where a member of school personnel or a parent believes that seclusion may have been used in the school, they should report it to the school principal. Where all three factors are present, that is, the child has been involuntarily detained, is alone and is physically prevented from leaving, then this is considered seclusion. It is not considered seclusion where one or two factors are involved.” (Child Protection Procedures for Schools, 2025)

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 or Behaviour Support documents. Therapeutic rapport will often take the form of building connection, restoring energy and repairing the relationship.

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, regulation room, sensory room.
- 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

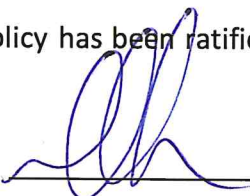
This Policy will commence in June 2026.

Timeframe for Review

This policy will be reviewed 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



Date

10/6/26

Chairperson Board of Management

Signed



Date

10/6/26

Principal

Next review date: April 2029

Appendix 1: Supporting Documents for Staff to Use (All available on Onedrive)	
FORM	CRITERIA
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.
Incident Log	Filled out and kept in student support file 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.
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	The class team/ staff involved will meet that evening or prior to school to have a debrief meeting, Debrief questions will be available in each classroom for staff to reflect and plan for the school day.

NCSE Record of Incident Involving Physical Restraint Form (Resource 4)	Document to be completed by relevant staff member with Deputy Principal. Form will be sent to NCSE by Deputy Principal. Copy of form will be saved in student's support file under folder NCSE Form. This form will be signed by the Principal and sent to NCSE after BOM meeting.
NCSE Physical Restraint Excel	A master excel spreadsheet will be completed after each NCSE Physical Restraint Form is opened. This excel will keep a record of parents being informed, principal signature on form and bom being informed. When all three are complete the NCSE Record of Incident Involving Physical Restraint Form will be sent to the NCSE.
Assault Procedure	If an assault/injury occurs to member of staff procedure will be followed. Procedure available on Behaviour Support Documents file on OneDrive.