Physiotherapy Policy

The Willows Catholic Primary School

VERSION:	26.05
ADOPTED:	May 2026
NEXT REVISION:	May 2027

Version Control

Date of last review:	New policy
Date of next review:	May 2027
Review period:	Annually
Policy status:	Recommended
Owner:	Headteacher
Version	26.05

Previous Versions

Version	Author	Date	Changes

This policy applies to

The Willows Catholic Primary School

only

With Christ at our heart, we are a loving, caring family where each individual is nurtured in mind and spirit to fully become the person God created. In learning together, we support each other to reach our full potential in a safe and stimulating environment where all are valued and respected.

Contents

1.	Statement of Intent	4
2.	Scope	4
3.	Legal Framework	5
4.	Principles	6
5.	Roles and Responsibilities	6
6.	Training Requirements	7
7.	Individual Physiotherapy Plans	8
8.	Risk Assessments	9
9.	Monitoring and Recording	9
10.	Equipment	10
11.	Safeguarding and Dignity	10
12.	Emergency Situations	11
13.	Monitoring and Review	11
14.	Appendix A: Operational Safeguarding and Environmental Principles	12
15.	Appendix B: Prompts for Physiotherapy Training and Staff Competency	15

1. Statement of Intent

The Willows Catholic Primary School is committed to ensuring that all pupils who require physiotherapy programmes, movement support or physical intervention receive safe, effective and dignified support throughout the school day.

The school recognises that physiotherapy provision within an educational setting plays an important role in:

- supporting physical development
- improving access to learning
- promoting independence
- maintaining comfort and mobility
- reducing the risk of injury or deterioration
- enabling pupils to participate fully in school life

The school also recognises that physiotherapy programmes can only be delivered safely when staff receive appropriate training, ongoing support and clear guidance from qualified professionals.

The school is committed to ensuring that:

- physiotherapy programmes are implemented consistently
- staff understand the purpose behind interventions
- staff feel confident and competent in delivering support
- pupils are treated with dignity and respect at all times
- concerns are identified and escalated promptly
- risks to pupils and staff are minimised through effective training and monitoring

The school acknowledges that observing exercises alone does not constitute sufficient training. Staff must have opportunities to:

- practise techniques under supervision
- receive corrective feedback
- ask questions
- understand safety considerations
- develop confidence before independently supporting pupils

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- teachers
- teaching assistants
- SEND support staff
- lunchtime supervisors where relevant
- temporary or agency staff
- volunteers involved in pupil support
- external professionals working within school

The policy applies to all physiotherapy-related activities carried out during:

- lesson time
- intervention sessions
- PE activities

- movement breaks
- personal care routines where relevant
- transitions around school
- educational visits where physiotherapy needs apply

This policy covers:

- physiotherapy exercise programmes
- stretching programmes
- strengthening activities
- mobility support
- positioning support
- balance and coordination activities
- gait training
- postural support
- movement breaks recommended by professionals
- physical support involving specialist equipment
- manual handling linked to therapy provision

The policy should be read alongside:

- the SEND Policy
- the Safeguarding Policy
- the Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- the Health and Safety Policy
- the Intimate Care Policy
- risk assessments and handling plans

3. Legal Framework

This policy has been developed with reference to:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- SEND Code of Practice 2015
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- NHS moving and handling guidance
- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy guidance

The school recognises its legal duty to:

- provide a safe working environment
- reduce foreseeable risks
- make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils
- ensure staff receive appropriate training
- safeguard children from harm
- promote pupil wellbeing and inclusion

4. Principles

The school believes that physiotherapy support should always:

- promote independence wherever possible
- maintain pupil dignity and self-esteem
- support access to education
- be child-centred and responsive to individual needs
- be delivered safely and consistently
- reflect professional advice accurately

The school will ensure that staff understand:

- why each exercise or intervention is required
- what correct technique looks like
- what unsafe practice looks like
- how to identify distress or discomfort
- when to stop an intervention
- how to seek support if concerned

The school recognises that poor technique or inconsistent delivery can:

- reduce the effectiveness of programmes
- cause discomfort or injury
- increase anxiety for pupils
- place staff at risk of injury
- compromise pupil progress

All physiotherapy support must therefore be:

- appropriately planned
- carefully monitored
- regularly reviewed
- delivered only by suitably trained staff

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Headteacher

The Headteacher will:

- ensure suitable systems and procedures are in place for safe physiotherapy provision across the school
- ensure staffing arrangements are appropriate to meet pupils' physical support needs safely
- ensure adequate time is allocated for training and refresher sessions
- ensure risk assessments and handling plans are implemented effectively
- monitor compliance with health and safety expectations
- ensure concerns raised by staff are taken seriously and addressed promptly
- support a culture where staff feel able to seek advice or report concerns without fear of criticism

SENDCo

The SENDCo will:

- coordinate physiotherapy provision across the school
- act as the main point of contact for physiotherapists and external agencies

- maintain up-to-date physiotherapy records and programmes
- ensure relevant staff have access to current guidance
- organise training and refresher sessions
- monitor staff confidence and competence
- ensure programme updates are communicated clearly
- oversee risk assessments and handling plans
- monitor the consistency and quality of implementation
- ensure concerns are escalated appropriately

Physiotherapists

The physiotherapist will:

- provide clear written guidance and exercise programmes where appropriate
- model exercises and interventions practically
- explain the purpose and intended outcomes of interventions
- identify risks, contraindications and safety considerations
- explain signs of pain, distress or fatigue
- clarify expected responses and warning signs
- provide guidance regarding appropriate pressure, positioning and pacing
- advise staff on adapting activities where appropriate
- review pupil progress and update programmes as required
- provide recommendations regarding equipment or environmental adjustments

Staff Delivering Programmes

Staff delivering physiotherapy support must:

- follow professional guidance accurately and consistently
- only carry out interventions they have been trained to deliver
- ask for clarification if unsure about any aspect of delivery
- prioritise pupil comfort, dignity and safety at all times
- stop interventions immediately if concerned about pain or distress
- report changes in presentation, mobility or behaviour promptly
- use equipment safely and appropriately
- record sessions or concerns where required
- attend training and refresher sessions as directed

Staff must not:

- improvise exercises or alter programmes independently
- continue interventions that appear unsafe
- physically force pupils to participate
- use equipment they are not trained to operate
- deliver physiotherapy support if they do not feel competent to do so safely

6. Training Requirements

The school recognises that high-quality training is essential to safe and effective physiotherapy provision.

Training must include:

- clear explanations of programme purpose and intended outcomes
- practical demonstrations by qualified professionals
- supervised opportunities for staff practice

- corrective feedback and coaching
- guidance on positioning and posture
- safe handling techniques
- recognising excessive or insufficient pressure
- identifying pain, fatigue and distress
- recognising compensatory movement patterns
- use of specialist equipment
- emergency procedures and escalation processes

Training should ensure that staff understand:

- what good quality movement looks like
- common errors and unsafe practice
- how to adapt support appropriately
- when exercises should not proceed
- how to monitor pupil responses during sessions

Competency checks may include:

- observed practice
- staff discussion
- practical demonstrations
- signed competency records

Training records will be maintained by the SENDCo.

Refresher training will take place:

- annually
- following changes to programmes
- following incidents or concerns
- where staff confidence or competence requires further support

7. Individual Physiotherapy Plans

Pupils requiring physiotherapy support will have an individual plan where appropriate.

Plans may include:

- exercise descriptions and instructions
- photographs or diagrams where appropriate
- required repetitions and duration
- positioning guidance
- equipment requirements
- staffing ratios
- environmental considerations
- warning signs and contraindications
- signs of fatigue or distress
- recording expectations
- emergency guidance
- review dates

Plans should be:

- written clearly and accessibly

- shared with relevant staff
- stored securely but readily accessible
- reviewed regularly
- updated promptly following professional review

8. Risk Assessments

Risk assessments will be completed for pupils requiring physiotherapy support or physical intervention.

Assessments will consider:

- the nature of the task
- the pupil's mobility and physical presentation
- communication needs
- medical needs
- fatigue levels
- behavioural and sensory factors
- staffing requirements
- environmental hazards
- equipment safety
- emergency procedures

Risk assessments will identify:

- potential hazards
- control measures
- staff responsibilities
- escalation procedures

Risk assessments will be reviewed:

- annually
- after incidents or injuries
- after significant changes in need
- following updated professional advice
- if concerns are raised regarding safety

9. Monitoring and Recording

Accurate monitoring and recording are essential to maintaining safe practice.

Staff may be required to record:

- completed sessions
- pupil participation levels
- signs of pain or discomfort
- fatigue or reduced tolerance
- refusal to participate
- changes in mobility or presentation
- equipment concerns
- incidents or near misses

Concerns must be reported promptly to:

- the class teacher
- SENDCo
- Headteacher where appropriate
- physiotherapy services if required

Patterns of concern will be monitored to:

- identify changes in pupil needs
- review programme effectiveness
- identify training needs
- reduce risk

10. Equipment

The school will ensure that:

- equipment is appropriate for pupil needs
- staff receive training before using specialist equipment
- equipment is checked regularly for safety
- faults are reported immediately
- unsafe equipment is removed from use promptly
- equipment is stored safely and hygienically

Staff must:

- use equipment only as instructed
- report damage or concerns immediately
- avoid adapting equipment without professional advice

11. Safeguarding and Dignity

All physiotherapy support and physical intervention must:

- preserve pupil dignity
- respect privacy
- use appropriate language and communication
- promote positive relationships
- avoid unnecessary physical contact
- be age and developmentally appropriate

Staff must remain alert to:

- safeguarding concerns
- unexplained injuries
- emotional distress
- changes in behaviour
- signs that interventions are causing anxiety or discomfort

Where possible:

- interventions should take place in appropriate environments
- pupils should be informed about what is happening
- pupils should be encouraged to communicate discomfort or concerns

12. Emergency Situations

In an emergency:

- immediate safety must be prioritised
- unsafe manual handling should be avoided wherever possible
- assistance should be requested immediately
- emergency procedures within risk assessments should be followed
- medical support should be sought where necessary

All incidents must:

- be recorded appropriately
- be reported to leadership
- be reviewed to identify lessons learned
- result in updated risk assessments where required

13. Monitoring and Review

The school will monitor:

- staff training compliance
- competency records
- implementation consistency
- incident reports
- pupil wellbeing and progress
- staff confidence levels
- physiotherapy provision effectiveness

This policy will be reviewed:

- annually
- following significant incidents
- following legislative changes
- following updated professional guidance
- where school procedures change

The review process may involve:

- staff consultation
- physiotherapist feedback
- parental feedback where appropriate
- analysis of incidents and concerns
- review of training effectiveness

14. Appendix A: Operational Safeguarding and Environmental Principles

This appendix should be read alongside the school's Physiotherapy Support and Physical Intervention Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Health and Safety Policy, SEND Policy and Intimate Care Policy.

The purpose of this addendum is to make explicit the operational principles that underpin physiotherapy support within The Willows Catholic Primary School. The school recognises that physiotherapy provision within an educational setting requires careful consideration of safeguarding, dignity, supervision, environmental suitability and professional accountability. Decisions regarding where and how physiotherapy support takes place must therefore be guided by clear safeguarding principles rather than convenience alone.

The school recognises that physiotherapy and movement programmes frequently require close physical contact between adults and pupils. While this contact may be entirely appropriate and necessary, it must always take place within an environment that protects both the child and the adult. Staff must be able to carry out physiotherapy support safely, professionally and transparently, while pupils must feel secure, respected and protected throughout all interventions.

Rooms used for physiotherapy support must therefore be carefully considered. Spaces should be large enough to allow safe movement, correct positioning and appropriate use of equipment without creating unnecessary risk. Rooms must allow staff to move safely around pupils and equipment without obstruction. Where floor-based exercises or movement activities take place, sufficient space must exist to reduce the likelihood of trips, falls or unsafe positioning.

The school recognises that privacy and visibility must be balanced appropriately. Pupils must not feel exposed, embarrassed or unnecessarily observed during physiotherapy support. Equally, physiotherapy support should not take place in completely isolated environments where staff are unable to summon support or where practice cannot be observed appropriately by others if required.

Rooms used for physiotherapy support should therefore, wherever possible, contain one or more of the following safeguarding features:

- visibility panels within doors
- nearby staff presence
- accessible locations within the school building
- the ability for another adult to enter quickly if required
- safe access to exits and communication systems

The school recognises that some spaces may appear private but may not be suitable from a safeguarding perspective. Small isolated rooms, locked rooms or rooms located away from regular staff movement may increase safeguarding risks for both pupils and staff. These spaces should therefore only be used following risk assessment and clear justification.

Similarly, highly public areas may also be unsuitable. Physiotherapy support should not routinely take place in corridors, open shared spaces or environments where pupils' dignity cannot be maintained. Pupils should not feel displayed or singled out during interventions. The suitability of a room must therefore be considered in relation to:

- the pupil's age and needs
- the nature of the intervention
- the level of physical support required
- safeguarding considerations
- supervision arrangements
- equipment requirements
- emergency access
- pupil dignity and emotional wellbeing

The school recognises that some pupils may require a quieter or lower-stimulation environment due to sensory needs, anxiety or medical presentation. In these situations, adjustments may be appropriate. However, safeguarding principles must still remain central. Reduced stimulation must not result in unsafe isolation.

Doors should generally remain unlocked during physiotherapy sessions unless there is a specific safeguarding, medical or behavioural reason requiring alternative arrangements. Staff should ensure that another member of staff is aware when sessions are taking place and where they are occurring.

The school also recognises that physiotherapy support can place staff in vulnerable situations if professional boundaries and transparency are not maintained clearly. Staff should therefore avoid situations where they are routinely alone with a pupil in isolated areas without visibility or oversight. Where one-to-one support is necessary, arrangements should ensure that practice remains observable and professionally accountable.

Environmental safety forms an essential part of safe physiotherapy practice. Rooms used for interventions should be free from clutter, trip hazards and unnecessary furniture. Equipment should be stored safely and checked regularly. Flooring should be appropriate for movement activities and should not create additional hazards.

Where specialist equipment is used, staff must ensure that:

- equipment has been checked prior to use
- sufficient space exists for safe operation
- emergency access remains possible
- pupils can transfer safely where required

The school recognises that physiotherapy support may occasionally need to be adapted due to staffing, timetabling or room availability. However, operational pressures must never override safeguarding principles or safe practice expectations.

If an appropriate space is unavailable, staff must escalate concerns to the SENDCo or senior leadership team rather than proceeding in an unsuitable environment.

The school further recognises that transparency protects both pupils and staff. Clear communication with parents, external professionals and staff teams regarding physiotherapy arrangements helps ensure consistency, accountability and confidence in provision.

All staff involved in physiotherapy support are expected to exercise professional judgement, prioritise safeguarding and seek guidance immediately if they are uncertain about the suitability of any environment or arrangement.

15. Appendix B: Questions and Prompts for Physiotherapy Training and Staff Competency

This appendix should be used to support physiotherapy training delivered within school and to promote high-quality, safe and consistent practice across staff teams.
The school recognises that effective physiotherapy training must go beyond staff observing exercises being demonstrated. Staff responsible for delivering physiotherapy programmes must develop a secure understanding of:

- correct technique
- positioning
- safe handling
- quality of movement
- warning signs
- appropriate levels of support and pressure
- escalation procedures
- pupil responses and presentation

This appendix is designed to support professional discussion during physiotherapy training sessions and to ensure that staff gain the depth of understanding required to deliver interventions safely and confidently.
The following questions and prompts should be used during training, supervision and programme reviews.

Understanding Technique and Quality of Movement
Staff should ask the physiotherapist to demonstrate exactly what correct positioning and movement should look like.

Questions should include:
"How should the pupil's body be positioned before the exercise begins?"
"What does correct alignment look like during this activity?"
"Can you demonstrate the correct hand placement and level of support required?"
"What pace should the movement be completed at?"
"What does good quality movement look like for this pupil?"
"What compensatory movements or incorrect patterns should staff look out for?"
"What are the most common mistakes adults make when carrying out this exercise?"

Staff should be encouraged to practise exercises under supervision and receive corrective feedback during training sessions.

Understanding Pressure, Force and Physical Support
Staff must understand how to recognise when physical support is either excessive or insufficient.

Questions should include:
"Can you demonstrate what too much pressure or force looks like during this exercise?"
"What physical signs suggest that the child is uncomfortable or experiencing pain?"
"What does not enough pressure or support look like?"
"How can staff tell whether the correct muscle groups are being engaged?"
"What signs suggest the pupil is compensating rather than completing the movement correctly?"
"What level of stretch or discomfort is expected and what would be considered unsafe?"

The physiotherapist should clearly explain:

- acceptable discomfort
- unsafe pain responses
- expected muscle responses
- signs that an exercise should stop immediately

Recognising Distress, Fatigue and Unsafe Presentation
Staff must understand how pupils may communicate physical distress verbally and non-verbally.

Questions should include:
"What signs suggest the pupil is becoming fatigued?"
"How may this pupil present when they are physically overwhelmed or uncomfortable?"
"What behavioural changes may indicate pain or distress?"
"What should staff do immediately if they observe concerning signs?"
"What are the red flags that mean the intervention must stop immediately?"

Staff should understand that signs of distress may include:

- facial grimacing
- withdrawal
- resistance
- muscle tightening
- changes in breathing
- emotional dysregulation
- shutting down
- refusal
- sudden behavioural changes

Training should emphasise that pupil wellbeing must always take priority over completing a programme.

Understanding the Purpose of Exercises
Staff are more likely to deliver physiotherapy programmes consistently when they understand the purpose behind each activity.

Questions should include:
"What is the intended outcome of this exercise?"
"What specific muscles, movements or functional skills are being targeted?"
"How should this support the pupil within everyday school activities?"
"What improvements would indicate that the programme is working effectively?"
"What signs would suggest that progress is limited or that further review is required?"

The physiotherapist should explain:

- the rationale for exercises
- expected outcomes
- links to functional independence
- realistic timescales for progress

Understanding Individual Pupil Needs

Staff must understand how physiotherapy programmes may need to be adapted in response to pupils' presentation on different days.

Questions should include:
"How may this pupil present differently when tired, anxious, dysregulated or unwell?"
"How can staff distinguish between refusal, fatigue, pain and emotional distress?"
"Are there times or circumstances where exercises should not proceed?"
"What sensory, behavioural or emotional factors may affect participation?"
"What adjustments can safely be made if the pupil is struggling?"

The physiotherapist should provide clear guidance regarding:

- flexibility within programmes
- non-negotiable safety expectations
- when to seek further advice

Consistency and Staff Competency
The school recognises that consistency across staff teams is essential.

Questions should include:
"Can all staff demonstrate these exercises back to you before delivering them independently?"
"What specific success criteria should staff use when monitoring exercises?"
"How will competency be assessed?"
"How often should refresher training take place?"
"What level of supervision is expected following initial training?"

The school may request:

- competency sign-off
- practical observations
- written guidance
- visual prompts
- demonstration videos
- annotated photographs

Training should ensure that staff leave sessions feeling competent and confident rather than simply familiar with exercises.

Recording, Monitoring and Escalation
Staff must understand what information should be monitored and recorded following physiotherapy sessions.

Questions should include:
"What concerns should staff record following sessions?"
"What patterns or changes should staff monitor over time?"
"When should concerns be escalated to physiotherapy services?"
"What changes would require urgent review?"
"What incidents or concerns should be reported immediately to leadership?"

The physiotherapist should clarify expectations regarding:

- monitoring

- communication
- review procedures
- escalation thresholds

Environmental and Practical Considerations
Staff should understand how the school environment may affect physiotherapy provision.

Questions should include:
"What type of environment is most suitable for these exercises?"
"How much space is required for safe delivery?"
"Are there situations where two adults should be present?"
"What environmental factors may increase risk?"
"How should staff manage interruptions or distractions safely?"
"What equipment checks should staff complete before beginning sessions?"
The physiotherapist should advise on:

- room suitability
- equipment safety
- staffing requirements
- supervision expectations
- safe positioning within the environment

Training Expectations
At the beginning of training sessions, school leaders may clarify expectations by stating:
"The school wishes to ensure that staff leave training feeling competent and confident in delivering physiotherapy programmes safely. We would therefore appreciate a strong focus on practical modelling, quality of movement, common errors, warning signs and the professional judgement staff are expected to apply during interventions."

This approach supports:

- staff confidence
- pupil safety
- consistent implementation
- professional accountability

Supporting Documentation
Where possible, the school may request supporting materials including:

- written exercise guidance
- annotated photographs
- video demonstrations
- contraindications and warning signs
- progression and regression guidance
- handling guidance
- staffing recommendations
- equipment instructions
- competency records

These materials help ensure consistency of practice and support ongoing staff development.