



Use of Reasonable Force and Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy

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1. Policy Statement

This policy sets out the school and trust's approach to the lawful, safe and proportionate use of reasonable force and restrictive physical intervention. The school is committed to maintaining a safe, calm and supportive environment in which all pupils, staff and visitors are protected from harm.

The use of force will always be a last resort and will only be used when necessary, proportionate and reasonable in the circumstances. Wherever possible, staff will seek to prevent incidents through positive behaviour management, de-escalation strategies and early intervention.

This policy should be read alongside the following:

- Behaviour and Relationships Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Medical Needs Policy
- Individual Risk Assessments and Behaviour Support Plans

2. Legal Framework

This policy is based on:

- the Education and Inspections Act 2006 - Sections 93 and 93A;
- the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025;
- DfE guidance: Use of Reasonable Force - Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Equality Act 2010
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Human Rights Act 1998

Under Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force to prevent pupils from:

- committing an offence;
- causing personal injury to themselves or others;
- damaging property; or
- prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline.

3. Definitions

Reasonable Force - The minimum necessary physical force used by staff that is proportionate, necessary and appropriate to the circumstances. All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances.

Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

Restrictive Physical Intervention - This refers to action that prevents, restricts or limits a pupil's movement where there is a risk of harm. It is an umbrella term which describes both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways.

The school recognises that restrictive physical intervention carries safeguarding and wellbeing risks and therefore must only be used where absolutely necessary.

Seclusion - A non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others, and preventing them from leaving either by physical obstruction, blocking, or through the use of consequences.

Restraint: - A non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact. For example, holding a pupil's arms to their sides or removing a pupil's crutches would both be considered forms of restraint.

4. Principles and underpinning values

Everyone attending or working in this school has a right to:

- recognition of their unique identity;
- be treated with respect and dignity;
- learn and work in a safe environment;
- be protected from harm, violence, assault and acts of verbal abuse.

Pupils attending this school and their parents have a right to:

- individual consideration of pupil needs by the staff who have responsibility for their care and protection;
- expect staff to undertake their duties and responsibilities in accordance with the school's policies;
- be informed about school rules, relevant policies and the expected conduct of all pupils and staff working in school;
- be informed about the school's complaints procedure

The school will:

- prioritise prevention and de-escalation;
- promote positive relationships;
- use trauma-informed and relational approaches;
- make reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND or disabilities;
- ensure interventions are proportionate and time-limited;
- minimise distress and risk, undertaking dynamic risk assessments throughout incidents;
- maintain pupil dignity wherever possible;
- record and review significant incidents.

The school recognises that some pupils may present behaviours linked to SEND and other vulnerabilities such as communication difficulties, autism, ADHD, attachment needs, adverse childhood experiences, trauma and mental health difficulties to name but a few. These factors will always be considered when assessing risk and responding to behaviour.

Determining Whether Restrictive Intervention is Appropriate

DfE guidance states that schools should not have a no-contact policy. Indeed, there will be times when school staff may need to use restrictive interventions and they should know that this option is available to them. However, use of any degree of force is unlawful if the particular circumstances do not warrant the use of physical force. Before using restrictive intervention, staff should therefore consider whether the intervention is:

I. Necessary

Staff should consider whether:

- there are less restrictive alternatives available;
- de-escalation strategies have been attempted where appropriate;
- the intervention is likely to reduce the risk of harm;
- the intervention itself may escalate the situation or create further risk.

Where possible, staff should communicate with colleagues to assess wider environmental risks and determine the safest response.

II. Proportionate

Staff must:

- use the least restrictive intervention necessary;
- use the minimum force required;
- apply force for the shortest possible time.

Staff should continually assess whether the intervention remains necessary and must reduce or stop the intervention as soon as it is safe to do so.

When assessing proportionality, staff must consider:

- the age, size and understanding of the pupil;
- any SEND, medical conditions or disabilities;
- communication needs;
- known trauma or vulnerabilities;
- equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.

III. Focused on Welfare and Dignity

Staff should:

- seek to maintain the dignity of the pupil wherever possible;
- consider the impact of the intervention on the pupil's emotional wellbeing;
- avoid unnecessary distress or humiliation;
- communicate calmly and clearly throughout the incident where possible;
- use appropriate verbal and/or non-verbal communication strategies.

Staff should remain alert to signs of distress, pain, breathing difficulties or emotional trauma and seek medical assistance where necessary.

5. Authorised Staff

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force under Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This includes teachers, teaching assistants and all

support staff including lunchtime supervisors, site staff and agency staff authorised by the Headteacher.

The school will ensure that staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force or restrictive physical intervention receive appropriate training in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies.

Staff who act lawfully, proportionately and in accordance with this policy with regard to physical intervention and restraint will be supported by the school.

6. Prevention and De-escalation

The school expects staff to use preventative strategies before considering physical intervention.

These may include:

- calm verbal instruction;
- distraction and diversion;
- reassurance;
- use of visual supports;
- offering choices;
- reducing sensory stimulation;
- strategic withdrawal;
- changing staff member;
- restorative approaches;
- positive behaviour support strategies.

Staff should seek assistance at an early stage where risk is escalating.

Physical intervention must never be used as a substitute for effective behaviour management.

7. Circumstances in Which Reasonable Force May Be Used

Reasonable force may be used to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- injuring themselves or others;
- committing a criminal offence;
- damaging property;
- causing serious disruption to learning;
- leaving a safe environment where this would place them at risk;
- fighting, assault or violence.

Examples may include:

- separating pupils involved in a fight;
- preventing a pupil running into a road;
- preventing a pupil harming themselves or others, including staff members;
- preventing serious classroom disruption;
- preventing dangerous misuse of objects.

8. Prohibited Practices

The following practices are prohibited except where immediately necessary to prevent serious injury or loss of life:

- using force as punishment;
- deliberately inflicting pain;
- deprivation of food, drink or medication;
- humiliating or degrading treatment;
- restricting breathing, for example by covering the mouth and/or nose;
- putting pressure on the neck, chest or throat;
- prone restraint unless exceptional circumstances justify it;
- seclusion that unlawfully restricts liberty;
- excessive or disproportionate force.

A member of staff may use reasonable force to search for legally prohibited items but may not do so to search for items banned under school rules only. Staff should refer to the Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools guidance document for detailed advice on searching a pupil.

Corporal punishment is unlawful.

9. Seclusion

Seclusion will only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. It is not a disciplinary response and will not be implemented by staff as a punishment as this would breach the school's approach to behaviour.

In the rare circumstances where this action may be necessary the place to which the pupil is confined will be safe and not feel threatening or intimidating to the pupil. The pupil will be supervised at all times during the period of seclusion. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil will be allowed to leave.

Any incident involving the use of seclusion will be recorded and reported in accordance with the procedures outlined below in section 11 - Recording and Reporting Duties.

10. Planned Interventions and Risk Assessments

Where a pupil is known to present foreseeable risks, it is crucial that risk assessments are in place so that staff who regularly work alongside them can physically intervene when necessary as safely as possible. As such, the school may develop one or more of the following:

- an Individual Risk Assessment;
- a Positive Handling Plan;
- a Behaviour Support Plan.

These plans should:

- identify triggers;
- outline preventative strategies;

- identify preferred de-escalation techniques;
- identify agreed responses;
- specify any approved restrictive interventions;
- be shared with relevant staff;
- be reviewed regularly with parents/carers and relevant professionals.

11. Pupils with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND)

The school recognises that some pupils with SEND may experience pain, heightened anxiety, sensory overload, communication difficulties or distress which may increase the likelihood of dysregulated behaviour. This can lead to pupils with SEND being disproportionately subject to the use of restrictive interventions.

Restrictive intervention must never discriminate unlawfully against SEND pupils. Staff will seek to understand the underlying causes of behaviour and provide proactive support wherever possible.

The school will:

- work collaboratively with parents/carers, pupils and professionals;
- make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010;
- consider sensory needs, developmental stage, medical conditions and disability-related behaviour;
- consider environmental adaptations;
- identify triggers and preventative strategies;
- support pupils to communicate distress or need effectively;
- develop individual behaviour support plans where appropriate.

Strategies may include:

- reducing sensory stimuli;
- adapting communication approaches;
- offering safe spaces or movement breaks;
- the use of visual supports;
- distraction and redirection;
- allowing processing time;
- the use of familiar adults, objects or routines.

Where foreseeable risks exist, appropriate risk assessments and behaviour support plans will be developed and reviewed regularly.

12. Recording and Reporting Duties (Statutory)

The School Standards Committee will ensure procedures are in place for recording and reporting incidents involving:

- significant use of force under Section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- restraint, including restraint without direct physical contact, in accordance with the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025 and
- seclusion.

All incidents must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable after the incident and, wherever possible, before the end of the same working day by the staff member(s) involved.

Records will include, as a minimum:

- names of pupil and staff involved;
- date, time, location and approximate duration of the intervention;
- relevant pupil needs or vulnerabilities, including SEND status where applicable;
- antecedents, triggers and relevant contextual information;
- preventative and de-escalation strategies attempted;
- reason the intervention was considered necessary and proportionate;
- type of intervention used and degree of force applied;
- any injuries, distress or adverse effects;
- post-incident support provided to all affected;
- follow-up actions and outcomes.

Any injuries must be reported in accordance with the Health and Safety Policy following RIDDOR requirements and Health and Safety Executive guidance.

Reporting to parents

Parents/carers will be informed in writing as soon as reasonably practicable and no later than on the same day. Reports to parents will normally include:

- the date, time, location and approximate duration of the intervention;
- brief account of why the intervention was considered necessary;
- brief account of the type of intervention and degree of force applied;
- details of any injuries sustained; and
- details of follow-up support, where appropriate.

The requirement to record and report applies even where restrictive interventions form part of an agreed Behaviour Support Plan or Positive Handling Plan.

Parents will normally be offered the opportunity for a follow-up discussion after significant incidents.

Exceptions to the reporting requirement

The duty to inform parents does not apply where the pupil is aged 20 or over and where informing a parent would likely result in serious harm to the pupil. In such circumstances, the matter will be managed in accordance with statutory guidance and safeguarding procedures and will usually involve liaising with children's social care services.

13. Post-incident Support and Safeguarding

Following any significant restrictive intervention, the school will consider the wellbeing of all pupils and staff involved.

Where appropriate, this may include:

- medical assessment or treatment;
- safeguarding review;
- emotional support or pastoral intervention;

- restorative conversations;
- review of Behaviour Support Plans or Risk Assessments;
- staff supervision or debrief.

Where possible, post-incident reflection discussions should involve a member of staff not directly involved in the incident to support impartiality and relationship repair.

The school recognises that restrictive interventions may be particularly distressing for pupils with SEND, trauma histories, communication difficulties or mental health needs. These factors must always be considered during both the incident and subsequent review.

Any concerns regarding excessive force, repeated interventions, discriminatory practice or staff conduct must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Headteacher.

14. Training

The school seeks to minimise the need for restrictive intervention. As such, staff will:

- seek to create supportive and inclusive learning environments;
- understand the importance of consistent routines, retaining high expectations of and high regard for pupils.

In addition, the school will ensure appropriate staff training in:

- positive behaviour management;
- preventative and de-escalation strategies;
- relational and trauma-informed practice;
- effective classroom management;
- active supervision of communal spaces;
- early identification of need;
- safeguarding;
- lawful use of reasonable force;
- approved restrictive intervention techniques
- recording and reporting requirements.

Training will emphasise that restrictive intervention must always necessary, proportionate, reasonable, time-limited and used only when less restrictive alternatives are insufficient.

Staff who have not received formal physical intervention training may still use reasonable force where lawful and necessary.

15. Monitoring, Review and Communication

The Headteacher, the School Standards Committee and the trust board will regularly review records and data relating to restrictive interventions in order to:

- identify patterns, trends and recurring triggers;
- review the effectiveness of preventative strategies;
- identify training or support needs;
- monitor the impact on pupils with SEND or other vulnerabilities;
- identify any disproportionate use relating to protected characteristics;
- support continuous improvement in behaviour and safeguarding practice.

The school will ensure its practices comply with the Equality Act 2010, the Human Rights Act 1998 and safeguarding duties.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where legislation or DfE guidance changes or where safeguarding reviews indicate amendments are necessary.

The school will ensure this policy is available to staff, parents/carers and pupils and is communicated through induction and training.

16. Complaints and Allegations

Complaints relating to the use of restrictive intervention will be investigated under the school's Complaints Procedure.

Allegations against staff will be managed in line with:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- the school's safeguarding procedures;
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) procedures where applicable.

The school recognises that physical intervention can be distressing for all involved and will ensure concerns are investigated fairly, proportionately and in a timely manner.

17. Linked Policies and Guidance

This policy should be read alongside:

- Behaviour Policy
- [Behaviour in Schools guidance](#)
- [Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention](#)
- [Equality Act 2010: advice for schools](#)
- [Searching, screening and confiscation in schools guidance](#)
- [Mental health and behaviour in schools](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- SEND Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Online Safety Policy
- Medical Needs Policy