

# Restrictive interventions and use of reasonable force policy

*They should each try to be the first to show respect to the other (RB 72:4)*

## 1. Introduction and aims

On rare occasions, staff may need to use restrictive interventions to safeguard pupils or maintain discipline in the school. Keeping Children, Safe in Education (2025) recognises that there are circumstances where it is appropriate for staff to use reasonable force to achieve these aims and states that schools must not have a no contact policy as this can put staff and pupils at risk. The aim of this policy is to ensure staff are confident about the context in which they could consider use of restrictive interventions or restraint in order to safeguarding pupil welfare.

## 2. Core statement

Restrictive interventions and reasonable force should only be used when they are necessary and proportionate, after de-escalation strategies have been attempted where appropriate and when there is a clear risk of serious harm to the pupil or others, an immediate risk of injury or serious damage to property or to prevent disorder.

Decisions on when to use restrictive intervention is a matter of professional judgement, and any intervention or restraint should be proportionate and reasonable in the context of the perceived risk and in the pupil's best interests. This would normally be after de-escalation strategies have failed. Should such an intervention be required the school should record the details, including any injury, and contact the parent on the same day to explain the circumstances involved.

This policy adopts the statutory terminology from Restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, in schools (DfE, 2026), including the definitions of 'restrictive intervention', 'reasonable force', 'significant incident', 'restraint' and 'seclusion'. Restrictive intervention refers to any action, physical or non-physical, that restricts a pupil's movement.

## 3. Legal framework

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives schools the power to use force that is reasonable in the circumstances for the purpose of preventing a pupil from doing (or continuing to do) any of the following:

- Committing an offence;
- Causing personal injury to, or serious damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil themselves);
- Prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any pupils receiving education at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

**Statutory guidance makes it clear that restrictive interventions and restraint cannot be used as a punishment.**

Section 550ZB of the Education Act 1996 also gives schools the power to use reasonable force to carry out searches for prohibited items where the young person has not consented to the search.

Prohibited items are:

- knives and weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- tobacco, vaping materials and cigarette papers
- fireworks
- pornographic images
- any article that has been or likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage property.

Relevant statutory and non-statutory guidance:

- KCSIE 2025;
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Advice for Schools DfE (2022)
- Use of reasonable force in schools DfE (updated 2025)
- Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026)

*This policy supersedes earlier guidance and aligns with the statutory and non-statutory guidance Restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, in schools (DfE, 2026).*

## 4. Terminology

### 4.1 **Restrictive interventions**

means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This guidance uses 'restrictive interventions' as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways.

### 4.2 **Reasonable force**

a term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances.<sup>4</sup> Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

### 4.3 **Restraint**

a term used in legislation referring to 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.

### 4.4 **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 making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave.

## 5. Responsibilities of the Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team will ensure the following:

- 5.1 There is a culture of respect and good relationships between staff and pupils so that the need for high-level intervention is reduced.

- 5.2 All staff are aware of the school policy and their powers and responsibilities regarding the use of restrictive interventions and restraint and their part in implementing this policy.
- 5.3 Staff are able to use de-escalation techniques strategies in the first instance unless the situation requires an immediate physical response.
- 5.4 All staff receive appropriate training in behaviour management, including de-escalation techniques so that they are confident to deal with incidents and only use restrictive interventions where necessary.
- 5.5 The school will assess any risk posed to staff and take steps to reduce these risks. Staff do not place themselves at risk when using physical restraint and are able to access medical treatment and take time off if injured.
- 5.6 The use of restrictive interventions and restraint is part of an overarching strategy of behaviour management within the school environment and that its use is closely aligned to the Pupil Behaviour Policy.
- 5.7 Staff are aware of any agreed adjustments to the policy and procedures that are in place for individual pupils who are vulnerable such as SEND pupils.
- 5.8 Staff are supported to use restrictive interventions and restraint where this is within acceptable parameters and in line with school policy.
- 5.9 Support is offered to pupils and staff involved in incidents requiring restrictive interventions and restraint.
- 5.10 Monitor and record incidents where restraint has been used. The incidents will be reviewed by the Safeguarding Committee and the Head and reported to the governing body.
- 5.11 Review the policy on restrictive interventions annually or in the case of changes in legislation or guidance.

## **6. Restrictive interventions and use of reasonable force**

- 6.1 School powers allow the use of reasonable force to control or restrain pupils where necessary, and its lawful use will be a defence to any related criminal prosecution or where an allegation is made against teaching staff.
- 6.2 To ensure the welfare of pupils and to protect staff from any misplaced allegations, any physical contact between staff and pupils must be appropriate within the context of the teacher/pupil relationship, the pupils' age and the circumstances. There are examples of appropriate positive physical contact that can be used to reassure, comfort, guide or calm a pupil.
- 6.3 Restrictive intervention can cover a wide variety of contact with pupils of varying degrees of intrusiveness ranging from positive handling, such as gentle guiding to physical restraint. The level of intervention and the degree of force required will be determined by the circumstances and the level of assessed risk to the pupil and others.
- 6.4 Generally, low-level physical contact/positive handling can be used to manage most behaviour, for example gentle contact to comfort, reassure or guide a pupil away from risk or block their movements.
- 6.5 For younger pupils, this positive handling can be used to control the child's movements in order to keep them from harm or danger. The level of contact and force that would be acceptable to achieve this would be like the actions that a reasonable parent would do to keep their own child safe.
- 6.6 In some situations, it may be necessary to use a restrictive intervention in order to hold back a pupil or control their movement and which involves restraint or the use of force. Where force is used, it must be reasonable – a proportionate response to the risk involved and used with a clear intent to prevent harm.
- 6.7 Reasonable force should involve “no more force than is needed” to achieve the desired outcome and should only be used for the purposes of restraining or controlling a pupil in order to safeguard pupils, stop damage to property or keep order in the classroom. What

is reasonable force will be down to the professional judgement of the staff member, but any use of force must be justifiable and the paramount consideration is that any action is taken in the interests of the pupil.

**6.8 Staff must never use any restraint or physical restrictive intervention that restricts a pupil's airway, breathing or circulation, including pressure on the neck, chest or abdomen. Prone or ground-based restraint must be avoided and, if it occurs unintentionally, released immediately.**

## **7. Procedure for the exercise of physical restraint**

- 7.1 Staff should have good grounds for believing that immediate action is necessary to prevent a student from significantly injuring themselves or others or causing serious damage to property. If at all possible, they should send for another member of staff.
- 7.2 Staff should take steps in advance to avoid the need for physical restraint, e.g. through dialogue and diversion, and the student should be warned orally that physical restraint will be used unless she/he desists.
- 7.3 Physical restraint must not be used in anger. When it becomes apparent that a student is not responding to verbal instruction and a violent incident is imminent, the member of staff, wherever possible, should call for assistance before engaging in physical restraint.
- 7.4 Calling for support and assistance is an essential step in order to provide a witness for any incident in addition to providing assistance.
- 7.5 When it becomes necessary to restrain a student, the member of staff should continue to talk to the student in a calm manner, offering choices and time for the student to become calm. Making statements such as "I will let you go as soon as you are calm" or "as soon as I know you are safe" may help to resolve the situation.
- 7.6 Only the minimum force necessary to prevent physical injury or damage should be applied.
- 7.7 Particular care must be taken to avoid inflicting any unnecessary pain or injury.
- 7.8 Restraint must not involve deliberate, painful, or dangerous procedures. It should:
  - Never interfere with breathing, blood supply or genital areas.
  - Never hold the head, throat or fingers.
  - Never hold wrists at the joints. The hold should be discontinued as soon as the situation is deemed safe.
- 7.9 When using physical restraint, members of staff have a responsibility to ensure that means other than force have been attempted or are proving impractical.
- 7.10 As soon as it is safe, restraint should be gradually relaxed to allow the student to regain self-control. The student should be told what will happen next to calmly reassure them, for example that you are going to release the hold and want them to stay quietly with you.
- 7.11 Restraint should be an act of care and control, not punishment.
- 7.12 The circumstances and justification for using physical restraint must be recorded immediately or as soon as possible, but no later than the next working day.

- 7.13 The member of staff must record the incident on My Concern and inform the Head and the Deputy Head (Pastoral) as soon as possible of the incident. The student's view should also be recorded as soon as possible, preferably on the same day.
- 7.14 If a member of staff or student has suffered an injury this must be reported and recorded at the Health Centre and a record of the injury should be passed on immediately to the Health & Safety Officer.
- 7.15 The Head or Deputy Head (Pastoral) will discuss the incident with the member of staff within 24 hours. A written record should include marking on a diagram to show where restraint has been used, the duration of the holding and a note of any potential injury to staff or student.
- 7.16 The Head /Deputy Head or House Master/Mistress will inform parents of the incident and allow the opportunity to discuss it the same day.
- 7.17 Counselling may be needed for staff who have been distressed by the incident. Following the incident the student should be counselled on the reasons why it was necessary to restrain him/her.

## **8. Vulnerable pupils**

8.1 Some pupils may exhibit challenging behaviour in response to overstimulating environments, stressful situations or an inability to communicate distress in any other way. This can make them more vulnerable to experiencing restrictive intervention and restraint and it is likely the experience will be traumatising.

8.2 The School will remain alert to pupils that may be vulnerable such as (but not limited to):

- Children with SEND needs
- Children who are experiencing mental health difficulties
- Children who have experienced trauma in their lives, for example, looked after children, refugee children and unaccompanied minors, children living with domestic abuse and children with child protection plans.

8.3 Under the Equalities Act 2010, the School will make reasonable adjustments where necessary to ensure these pupils are not disadvantaged and receive individual support to reduce the need for restraint and restrictive intervention. The needs of vulnerable learners, including supportive plans, interventions or actions will be reviewed with the Director of Pastoral Care, DSL, SENCo and HsM in a termly vulnerable learners meeting.

8.4 Vulnerable pupils whose behaviour is likely to increase the risk of restrictive intervention and restraint should have a behaviour support plan in place from the outset and pupils and parents should be fully involved in agreeing this plan. However not all vulnerable pupils will require this.

## **9. Planning and prevention**

9.1 The School will continue to monitor behaviour, promote good behaviour and promote wellbeing in order to prevent the need for restrictive practices, including seclusion or physical restraint.

9.2 All vulnerable pupils' who are at heightened risk of experiencing restrictive interventions and restraint should have an individual behaviour support plan

9.3 Seclusion refers to confining a pupil alone in a space from which they are prevented from leaving, physically or through perceived consequences. This requires continuous supervision and must always be recorded and reported.

9.4 Where a pupil requires restrictive intervention on more than one occasion, or where there is a known risk of restrictive intervention being required, the school will ensure a support plan and risk assessment are in place. This should consider their specific circumstances, any triggers to behaviours, and strategies or approaches that may reduce the number of incidents. The plan should be reviewed regularly by the DSL at the Safeguarding Committee and at vulnerable learners' meetings.

9.5 Where it is known that restrictive interventions involving force or restraint may be required in order to manage an individual pupil's behaviour this should be planned for in partnership with parents and the pupil (where appropriate) and an intervention plan / risk assessment put in place.

9.6 Welfare and other support plans must be reviewed with the pupil and parents after any significant incident involving restrictive intervention.

9.7 Planned intervention can be viewed as positive as it demonstrates a commitment to keeping children safe and enables them to take part in the planning process.

## **10 Whole School Approach**

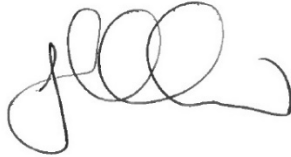
10.1 All staff will be alert to situations and circumstances that can lead to incidents that may require restrictive intervention and take active steps to avoid issues escalating. Any behaviour that is cause for concern will be recorded on MyConcern and triaged by the Safeguarding Team.

10.2 The focus of behaviour management is de-escalation and promoting pupil wellbeing, positive relationships and community living with bespoke support for vulnerable pupils.

10.3 The school will regularly review environmental factors within the school that may lead to incidents in the school or elsewhere, including supervision, potential hot-spots and relationships between pupils. We remain committed to reviewing and managing risk for all pupils and staff.

## **11 Review and Monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the DSL and updated as necessary to ensure it remains effective and compliant.

**Downside School Policy Approval Record****Written by** C Murphy , Deputy Head Pastoral**Reviewed by** SLT**Date** April 2026**Authorised by** Chair of the Board of Governing Body**Date** April 2026**Next Review** April 2027**Circulation** All staff**Status** Complies with ISI 2025 regulatory requirements