



Reasonable Force and Restrictive Interventions Policy

Board Approved Date	July 2026
Version	1.0
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Review Date	April 2028

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, can have a significant impact on the pupils, staff members and parents involved, as well as the wider classroom. Within Education South West schools (ESW), the use of restrictive interventions is likely to be rare. However, this policy and the procedures referenced within it, are in place to support all stakeholders where restrictive interventions are required as a last resort. Headteachers, and those under their direction, have a legal power to use restrictive interventions where it is deemed necessary to protect an individual, others or property and to keep individuals safe.
- 1.2. This policy is in place to help schools proactively minimise the need to use restrictive interventions through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies, and when necessary, help staff feel more confident in knowing how to use interventions safely, appropriately and lawfully.

2. Scope and Purpose

- 2.1. The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidelines on the use of restrictive interventions including reasonable force and seclusion by staff members to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students, staff and visitors to the school.
- 2.2. This policy applies to all staff members who work within Education South West schools both on site and when carrying out school related duties (e.g. on a school trip)

3. Definition

- 3.1. For the purpose of this document:
 - Education South West is referenced as ESW
 - For clarity, this policy will use the following definitions¹:

Term	Definition
Restrictive Intervention	a 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.
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. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.
Significant Incident	Any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff as described in section 6 of this policy. This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.
Seclusion	a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others, and preventing them from leaving

¹ As described in the Department for Education: Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force in schools. Guidance for schools in England. April 2026

	either by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave.
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.

The various restrictive interventions above have been defined for completeness and should not be construed as an endorsement or otherwise for their use in ESW schools. Some will not be relevant to most of our schools.

4. Relevant Legislation

4.1. The principal legislation to which this policy relates are:

- the Education and Inspections Act 2006, especially sections 93 and 93A
- the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations
- the Human Rights Act 1998
- the Equality Act 2010

5. Who can use reasonable force?

5.1. All members of staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances. This is to prevent or stop a pupil:

- Causing injury to themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence
- Damaging property
- Causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

5.2. Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or restrictive interventions are trained regularly in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies by fully qualified instructors. Risk assessments will be in place to support pupils and staff where it is more likely that reasonable force and/or restrictive interventions may be required.

6. Other physical contact with pupils

6.1. ESW schools do not operate a 'no contact policy'. ESW schools will not grant any requests by parents or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or restrictive interventions as this would mean that staff could be left unable to intervene where reasonable to fully protect pupils.

6.2. There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to have some physical contact with pupils which does not give rise to any question over the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions. This will depend on the circumstance, but examples of occasions when physical contact is generally appropriate might include:

- To give first aid
- To guide or escort pupils, such as holding the hand of a pupil at the front/back of the line when going to assembly, when walking together around the school or on a school trip, or when helping a pupil to a space they have chosen to access to self-regulate
- to comfort a distressed pupil
- to congratulate or praise a pupil, for example a pat on the back or a handshake
- to demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- to demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching

In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in a given situation, the member of staff should use their judgement and have regard to:

- the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- whether there are other adults present
- the age of the pupil
- any SEND or vulnerabilities of the pupil
- any alternative strategies that do not include physical contact that can be used.

7. Guiding principles where reasonable force and/or restrictive interventions may be required

7.1. The decision on whether it is reasonable to use force and/or other restrictive interventions, depends on the individual circumstances of each situation. In assessing whether force and/or other restrictive interventions are reasonable in a situation, the member of staff should use their professional judgement. They should consider the following factors (not an exhaustive list):

7.2. Is the use of reasonable force and/or restrictive interventions **necessary**:

- Staff will consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage the situation
- Staff will assess whether reasonable force and/or restrictive intervention is likely to reduce the relevant risks, or whether its use would escalate further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself
- Where possible, staff will communicate with other staff members to understand the broader risks in the environment.

7.3. Is the use of reasonable force and/or restrictive interventions **proportionate**:

- Staff should use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce the relevant risks.
- If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff will reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy.
- Staff will consider the personal circumstances of the pupil such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.

7.4. The **pupil's welfare**:

- Staff will consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. For example, pupils who have experienced an adverse life event, with

diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, past trauma or neglect, communication difficulties, or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.

- Staff will seek to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity. This may include, where possible, considering the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.
- Where possible, staff will clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and explain what the pupil needs to do.
- For pupils with difficulties with speech, language and communication, or with English as an additional language, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies will be used to ensure the pupil understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.
- Staff will seek to understand how the pupil is feeling and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

7.5. Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND)

7.5.1. Some children and young people with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. In particular, pupil's who are non-verbal or who find verbal communication challenging may express their needs, discomfort or confusion through actions.

7.5.2. Where there is a likely or known increased risk of this applying to a pupil in an ESW school, the school will develop in partnership with parents and other professionals, prevention and de-escalation strategies which will be tailored to the needs of the pupil.

7.5.3. Where plans are in place to identify prevention and de-escalation strategies, those plans will also include where it may be appropriate for staff members to have increased physical contact with the pupil. These plans will be discussed and shared with all relevant people including parents.

7.5.4. These plans do not remove the lawful power of the school and its staff to use reasonable force and/or restrictive interventions as this will depend on the circumstances of the incident. What the plans are designed to do is to attempt to reduce the likelihood of reasonable force and/or restrictive intervention being necessary.

8. Where application of reasonable force and/or restrictive intervention is being considered

8.1. When faced with a situation where reasonable force and/or restrictive intervention may be required to ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils, staff and/or visitors, staff should carefully consider the following:

8.2. Assessment of the situation:

- Is there an immediate threat to the safety of pupils, staff and/or visitors?
- How severe is the threat? Physical harm, significant disruption and/or damage to property
- Have de-escalation attempts been made? Staff will ensure that all de-escalation techniques have been proven ineffective before resorting to physical force.

8.3. Proportionality and Necessity:

- Minimum force. Staff will use the least amount of force necessary to remove the risk of harm and safety to the individual and others.
- Duration. Staff will apply force for the shortest possible time to stop harm from being caused to the individual and/or others
- Proportionate Response. Staff will ensure that the level of force is used proportionate to the severity of the threat.

8.4. Physical and Emotional Safety

- Staff will take care to avoid causing unnecessary pain or injury to the student
- Staff will be mindful of the emotional impact on the pupil and provide support following the incident.

8.5. Communication

- Clear instructions. Staff will communicate (wherever possible) with the pupil throughout the intervention, explaining why the force is being used and what is expected of them.
- Staff will maintain a calm and controlled demeanour to help de-escalate the situation and reassure the pupil

8.6. Environmental Considerations

- Staff will try to ensure that the environment where the force is used is as safe as possible, minimising the risk of accidental injury.
- Where possible, there will be another member of staff present as a witness to the intervention

9. Immediately following the use of reasonable force and/or restrictive intervention

- 9.1. Where required, pupils and staff will be provided with the appropriate first aid following an incident
- 9.2. Staff will support the pupils involved and those who are witness with the emotional impact of the incident
- 9.3. Staff will be provided with support for the emotional impact of the incident by senior members of staff in the school. They are also able to access support through their union and through the Employee Assistance Programme ([Mental Health and Wellbeing Videos and Resources](#))

10. Training and Preparedness

- 10.1. The school will ensure that all staff members are aware and have an understanding of the use of reasonable force and restrictive interventions policy and its principles. All relevant staff will have enhanced training.
- 10.2. Relevant staff will have refresher training to maintain competence

11. Unacceptable uses of force

- 11.1. It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment
- 11.2. Pupils will not be restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation for example, by covering the mouth and/or nose, or applying pressure to the neck

region or abdomen. The use of force is dangerous, particularly where it occurs on the ground. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their holds or re-position into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.

12. Use of reasonable force to search pupils

- 12.1. Head teachers and staff they authorise have a statutory power to search a student or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the student may have a prohibited item. A member of staff can use such force as is reasonable to search for legally prohibited items. The decision to use reasonable force should be made on a case-by-case basis. Staff should refer to the [Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools](#) guidance document for detailed advice on searching a student.
- 12.2. In the vast majority of cases where staff are concerned that a pupil is concealing a prohibited item, the school will only use reasonable force where all other strategies have been exhausted. This is likely to be in the case where the pupils behaviour is an immediate threat to the individual or others as a result of the pupils use or threat of use of the prohibited item.

13. Seclusion

- 13.1. Seclusion - a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving - 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. In such circumstances, the pupil is not acting with intent. Seclusion will not be implemented by staff through threat of punishment.
- 13.2. 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.
- 13.3. An incident involving the use of seclusion will be recorded and reported in accordance with the procedures outlined in the section on 'Recording and reporting duties'.
- 13.4. Seclusion, as defined in this policy, is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. There are disciplinary measures that are similar, such as removal from the classroom.

14. Recording and reporting duties

- 14.1. Schools must ensure that a procedure is in place for recording each significant incident in which a staff member uses force on a pupil, as part of the school's statutory duty under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- 14.2. Incidents must be recorded using the Trust provided online reporting tool by the staff member involved as soon as practicable after the event and no later than the same day. Where the online system is not immediately available to staff, they can use the template in Appendix 1 or school-based version. However, the information in that document should be uploaded to the online system as soon as it is available to use.

The online reporting tool can be found by accessing the ESW SharePoint homepage and looking for the icon and description for reporting restrictive interventions.

14.3. Schools have a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents of the pupil involved in a significant incident where reasonable force, restrictive intervention and/or seclusion has been used are informed as soon as is practicably possible. They should endeavour to do so no later than the same day. The only exception to the requirement to report would be where, in doing so, it would likely result in serious harm to the pupil. Where this is the case, the report should be given to the parent who it can be reported to without resulting in significant harm or, if there are none, to the local authority within whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident.

14.4. The report to parents will include the following details:

- Time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- Brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
- Brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force
- Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable

14.5. The requirement to report applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a school plan.

14.6. Schools will centrally record and track significant incidents or reasonable force, restrictive intervention and seclusion to monitor any emerging patterns that can be used to support pupils and staff. The records will also be used to learn lessons and update staff training.

14.7. Governors will regularly review and interrogate data on restrictive interventions to ensure that school leaders:

- Learn lessons from incidents especially where approaches have been used for some time but are not effective
- Understand pupils' repeat patterns and triggers to interrogate the effectiveness of pupil support measures
- Identify any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to pupils who share protect characteristics, have SEN, or other types of vulnerability.

15. Complaints and Allegations

15.1. Any complaints should be directed to the school headteacher who will follow the school's complaints policy

15.2. Any allegations in regards of the conduct of a member of staff should be directed immediately to the headteacher of the school. Where the allegation is against the headteacher, it should be directed to Chair of Governors of the school. Contact information for them is available on the school website.

Appendix 1

Use of Reasonable Force, Seclusion or Restrictive Intervention Recording Form

This form should be used to record incidents where a member of staff has needed to use a restrictive intervention with a student at the school. This may have included reasonable force, seclusion and/or restraint².

This form needs only to be completed where the intervention is deemed to have been a 'significant incident' that is not considered 'appropriate physical contact'³

To be completed by the member of staff involved in the physical contact

Details of those involved:

Staff Forename:		Staff Surname:	
Student Forename:		Student Surname:	
Student DoB:		Student Year Group:	

(If reasonable force was used with more than one student, please complete a form for each student)

Incident Details:

Date of Incident:		Time of Incident:	
Location of Incident:		Approx. Length of Time Intervention was Used:	
What preventative or de-escalation strategies were used?			
Why was force assessed as necessary?			
Account of Incident			
Please include details e.g. What led up to the incident, identified or potential triggers if known, type of reasonable force applied, the degree of force, did anyone suffer any injuries?			
Was medical treatment or additional support required for staff or students following the incident? Please provide details			

Witness(es)

² As described in the Department for Education: Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force in schools. Guidance for schools in England. April 2026

³ As described in the Department for Education: Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force in schools. Guidance for schools in England. April 2026

Witness 1 Name:		Witness 2 Name:	
Witness 3 Name:		Witness 4 Name:	

Staff Signature:	
Print Name:	
Date of Completion:	

To be completed by member of staff not involved in the incident

Student Views:

What were the views of the student in regards of the incident?

Witness 1 Statement:
Witness 2 Statement:
Witness 3 Statement:
Witness 4 Statement:

Unless there are safeguarding reasons not to, all parents should be informed about the incident as soon as possible. Parents should be provided with the following information:

- Time, date, location and approximate length of time the force was used
- Brief account of what type of reasonable force was applied, and the degree of force
- Details of any physical injuries sustained (if applicable)
- Brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance

Date and Time Parents Informed:	
Parent Comments (if provided):	

SLT Oversight/Comments: