



Use of Restrictive Interventions Policy (including reasonable force & seclusion)

Approved by	Richard McCabe
Approval date	August 2026 (effective 1 September 2026)
Next review due	August 2027
Applies to	All registered pupils aged 7–16 and staff at Grovehill and Gaddesden
Document status	Final
Proprietor/chair signature	

Related policies

[Behaviour Policy](#)

[Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy](#)

[Complaints Policy](#)

[Health and Safety Policy](#)

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1. Aims and scope

Safety, Empathy and Ambition guide Redbourn Park's approach: we create a safe, secure and supportive environment; understand each pupil's distress, communication and needs; and use the least restrictive response compatible with dignity and progress.

There are times when restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, are lawful and necessary to keep people safe. Because these interventions can have a significant impact on pupils, staff and parents/carers, they will be used only where necessary, reasonable and proportionate to the risk, and as the least restrictive option likely to be effective for the shortest time. Staff will use prevention and de-escalation where practicable, but may act immediately in an emergency; action does not depend on every possible strategy having first been attempted.

This policy aims to:

- Minimise the need to use restrictive interventions, through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies
- Help school staff feel confident in knowing how to use restrictive interventions safely, appropriately and lawfully, when they are necessary
- Clearly set out the steps for recording and reporting incidents of reasonable force, seclusion and restraint
- Protect the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all pupils and staff, and help create a positive and safe place for everyone at school

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education (DfE) [guidance on restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools](#). It also meets the requirements of:

- Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, inserted by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009
- Section 550ZA and section 550ZB of the Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- The Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Department for Education guidance on searching, screening and confiscation
- Paragraph 16A of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (inserted by The Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025)

3. Definitions

The terms we use in this policy are defined as follows. These definitions are based on the Department for Education's guidance on restrictive interventions (linked to in section 2 of this policy).

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

Examples of restrictive interventions could include:

- Supervised seclusion of a pupil in an area away from others, used only as a non-disciplinary safety measure to protect others from harm while the pupil is experiencing high levels of dysregulation
- Passive physical contact, such as a staff member blocking a pupil's path if they're running towards danger (like a busy road), or staff standing between pupils to prevent a fight

Reasonable force refers to the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to restrain children, using no more force than is needed for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

Restraint is a non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises a pupil, limits their movement, or restricts their freedom to move, leave or access an area beyond the ordinary support and boundaries of school life. It may involve direct physical contact or another restriction of liberty. Planned direct-contact holds will be used only by staff trained and assessed as competent in the approved techniques. In an unforeseen emergency, staff may use lawful reasonable force that is necessary and proportionate to prevent harm.

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention that keeps a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevents them from leaving by physical obstruction or blocking. Redbourn Park will never create or maintain seclusion by threatening punishment. Seclusion is used only as a safety measure to protect others from harm while a pupil is experiencing high levels of dysregulation.

A significant incident is any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between a member of staff and a pupil. This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

3.1 Appropriate physical contact with pupils

Our school does not have a 'no contact' policy. We do not grant any requests by parents/carers or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions.

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 or other restrictive interventions.

Examples include:

- Providing first aid to a pupil
- Guiding or escorting a pupil through the school building or on a school trip by holding their hand
- Comforting a pupil who is upset
- Offering congratulations or praise, such as with a pat on the back or handshake
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- When demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching

In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in any given situation, staff should use their professional judgement, and have regard to:

- Our school's child protection and safeguarding policy
- The specific circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present
- Factors including, but not limited to:
 - The pupil's age
 - Any known vulnerabilities, including the pupil's special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
- Whether any alternative strategies that do not involve physical contact can be used. Staff will explain the purpose of contact, seek the pupil's assent where possible, follow known communication, sensory, trauma and intimate-care preferences, and use the least-contact safe alternative. Physical contact must never be used as a reward or as coercion.

3.2 Seclusion

As defined above, seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention that keeps a pupil confined away from others and prevents them from leaving by physical obstruction or blocking. It may be used only as a safety measure to protect others from harm while the pupil is experiencing high levels of dysregulation.

We use seclusion only as a safety measure to protect others from harm while a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. It must never be threatened or used as punishment, and it is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. The pupil must be allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced. Please see our Behaviour Policy for disciplinary responses.

During seclusion:

- The pupil will be secluded only in a safe, suitable place that does not feel threatening or intimidating, such as a wellbeing room, breakout area or therapy room. They will be continuously supervised by sufficient appropriately trained staff, determined through an individual and site-specific risk assessment rather than a fixed staffing formula. The pupil's welfare, communication needs and ability to summon help will be monitored throughout,

and they will be permitted to leave as soon as preventing them from leaving is no longer necessary and proportionate.

- 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 set out in section 12 of this policy.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The proprietor/chair

Richard McCabe, as proprietor/chair, is responsible for:

Reviewing and approving this policy

Ensuring that a procedure is in place for recording and reporting each:

- Significant incident involving force
- Seclusion incident
- Restraint incident

Taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the procedures for recording and reporting the use of force, seclusion and restraint are followed

Regularly reviewing and interrogating data on the use of restrictive interventions in our school

Supporting and challenging school leaders to identify where changes may be needed to practice. For example:

- If approaches have been used for some time but haven't been effective
- If there is any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions, including in relation to pupils who share protected characteristics or have SEND or other types of vulnerabilities

4.2 Site Leads/acting headteachers

Joe Scales at Grovehill and Emily Giddens at Gaddesden, as Site Leads/acting headteachers, are responsible at their respective sites for:

- Implementing and overseeing this policy consistently at Grovehill and Gaddesden, with site-specific risk controls
- Making sure that appropriate and high-quality training on preventative strategies and the safe and lawful use of restrictive interventions is provided for staff who need it, based on our school's individual context and needs
- Ensuring adequate staffing levels to support positive behaviour management
- Monitoring incidents involving restrictive interventions, including regular review of incidents to refine and improve processes
- Ensuring compliance with recording and reporting requirements
- Authorising named staff to search a pupil or their belongings only where there are reasonable grounds and the search is lawful, necessary and proportionate under the DfE's searching guidance and the Behaviour Policy
- Following the procedures set out in our complaints policy to deal with any complaint about the use of restrictive interventions

- Following the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education if an allegation regarding inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive intervention is made against a member of staff

4.3 All staff

All members of staff are responsible for:

- Making sure they have read and understood the principles of this policy and any other linked policies
- Using de-escalation techniques and positive behaviour management strategies to try to minimise and prevent the need for restrictive interventions
- Accurately recording in CPOMS, as soon as practicable, every seclusion incident, restraint incident and significant incident involving force in which they are involved
- Immediately notifying the relevant Site Lead/DDSL and Jennifer Bryant as DSL by direct communication; a CPOMS alert must not be relied on as the sole notification route.
- Recording any injuries that occur as part of an incident involving restrictive intervention, and following our health and safety policy to ensure these are reported to the Health and Safety Executive where necessary
- Taking part in training on preventative strategies and the safe and lawful use of restrictive interventions, if relevant to their role (this may include additional training appropriate to their responsibilities)
- Engaging in follow-up conversations to debrief and reflect on incidents involving restrictive intervention in which they were involved, to help us understand what happened and why

4.4 Designated safeguarding lead (DSL)

Jennifer Bryant, as DSL, is responsible for:

- Reporting every seclusion incident, restraint incident and significant incident involving force to each parent/carers of the pupil involved
- Making sure records are kept securely and in accordance with safeguarding and data protection procedures
- Applying the statutory notification exception where notifying a pupil's parent/carers is likely to result in serious harm: the incident will be reported to any parent/carers who can be notified without resulting in significant harm, or, if there is none, to the local authority where the pupil ordinarily resides (see sections 12.2 and 12.3)

4.5 Special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO)

The SENCO is responsible for:

- Working with pupils, parents/carers and relevant school staff to develop and review behaviour support plans and risk assessments for any pupils with SEND where it's been identified that there is an increased likelihood of the need to use restrictive interventions
- Ensuring staff are aware of individual pupil needs and associated behaviour support strategies
- Working with staff who know pupils well, to identify and manage risk (such as trigger points when challenging behaviour is more likely to occur)
- Working with pupils, parents/carers, staff and other relevant professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies
- Advising on reasonable adjustments for any pupils with disabilities when considering prevention and de-escalation strategies
- Participating in the review of restrictive intervention incidents involving any pupil with SEND
- Providing advice and support on the application of this policy for pupils with SEND

- Contributing to staff training on SEND and behaviour management, including the use of restrictive interventions

5. Acceptable uses of force

All our school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain situations.

Staff can use reasonable force to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- Hurting themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence
- Damaging property
- Causing disorder among pupils, in or out of lessons

While all staff have this power, some staff, especially those who work closely with pupils who might show challenging behaviour, are more likely to need to use it than others.

We will ensure that planned interventions are undertaken by staff who are trained and assessed as competent, that individual and site risk assessments are current, and that emergency action remains lawful, necessary and proportionate. See section 11 for training and risk-assessment requirements.

Any significant incident involving the use of force will be recorded and reported in accordance with the procedures set out in section 12 of this policy.

6. Unacceptable uses of force

It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment. We never use force as a sanction, threat or deterrent.

Our staff understand that any form of force or restraint carries a risk of physical and psychological harm, so we always avoid using these measures where possible.

The following uses of force are never acceptable:

- Staff using force for the purpose of punishment
- Staff restraining a pupil in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation, for example by covering their nose and/or mouth or applying pressure to their neck or abdomen
- Staff using force on the ground. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their hold or move into a safer position as quickly as possible

Section 5 of this policy sets out the instances where staff may use reasonable force. Section 9 of this policy provides guidance for staff on what to consider before using it.

7. Using reasonable force to search pupils

The Site Leads/acting headteachers, and only staff expressly authorised by them, may search a pupil or their belongings where there are reasonable grounds to suspect a prohibited item listed in the DfE's searching, screening and confiscation guidance or an item banned under school rules. Staff will seek the pupil's cooperation and ensure every search is lawful, necessary, proportionate and consistent with the Behaviour Policy.

Using force to conduct a search is an exceptional step. Reasonable force may be used only where the statutory conditions are met and only to search for a prohibited item for which force is legally permitted, such as knives, weapons, stolen items or illegal drugs. It must not be used to search for an item banned only under school rules, such as a mobile phone.

The decision to use reasonable force to carry out a search should be made carefully, on a case-by-case basis and taking into consideration the level of risk to pupils and staff. Please see our behaviour policy for more information on how we conduct searches.

8. Prevention and de-escalation strategies

Restrictive intervention is used only when necessary. We aim to minimise its use as much as possible, using both whole-school and individual approaches.

Our whole-school approach includes:

- Consideration of how our school and classroom environment can support all pupils to achieve and thrive
- Sharing best practice for whole-class behaviour management, and for managing communal spaces such as corridors and playgrounds
- Training staff in effective communication strategies, such as using appropriate tone of voice and empathy to aid de-escalation
- Development of working staff-pupil relationships and trust
- Recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning
- Staff use daily briefings to discuss ongoing issues and reflect upon good practice

The individual approaches we use include:

- Working closely with parents/carers to support individual pupils
- Strategies to support individual pupils based on their identified needs, including:
 - The development of behaviour support plans
 - Strategies to help pupils calm down before their behaviour escalates
 - Making 'reasonable adjustments' where a pupil has a disability, to help them participate in school life as fully as possible
 - Risk assessing pupils based on their identified needs.

8.1 De-escalation when a situation arises

When a staff member is faced with a situation where a restrictive intervention may need to be used, they should consider using de-escalation techniques first, wherever possible. Techniques that could be used in these situations include:

- Having open body language and being aware of a pupil's personal space
- Taking a pupil away from an 'audience' – speaking to them on their own rather than in front of a group of other pupils or staff
- Using empathy – asking the pupil to help you understand their feelings
- Distraction techniques
- Offering a calm space for the pupil to go to so they can self-regulate
- Verbal warnings – calmly reminding the pupil of the consequences of their behaviour

9. Deciding when the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate

9.1 Necessity and proportionality

The decision on whether to use restrictive interventions is down to the professional judgment of the staff member and will always depend on the individual circumstances of each situation.

Staff should always consider whether there are other ways to manage the situation, such as the de-escalation techniques outlined in section 8.1 of this policy and/or seeking assistance from a colleague. However, there may be times when staff have no other choice but to use restrictive interventions, to reduce the risk of harm to the pupil and/or others.

When assessing whether a restrictive intervention is required, staff should always consider:

Is it necessary?

- Are there other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage the situation?
- Is a restrictive intervention likely to successfully reduce the risks, or could its use escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself?

Is it proportionate?

- Staff should use the least amount of force or the least restrictive intervention for the least amount of time required to reduce the risks
- If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy
- Staff should consider the individual circumstances of the pupil, such as their age, size and any medical conditions, SEND or other vulnerabilities

9.2 Pupil and staff welfare

Pupil welfare

The most important consideration when using a restrictive intervention is the safety and wellbeing of the pupil involved, as well as the safety of other pupils and staff. Staff should always consider the potential impact on the pupil's welfare balanced against any actions taken. For example, staff should bear in mind that pupils who have experienced adverse life events, trauma or neglect, or who have diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, communication difficulties or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.

If a restrictive intervention is needed, staff should always aim to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity. This includes consideration of the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.

Staff should, wherever possible, clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and what the pupil needs to do, including using verbal and non-verbal strategies where needed, and giving time for the pupil to process information and respond where appropriate.

Staff should 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.

Support following an incident

As soon as possible after any use of restrictive intervention, our school will evaluate the incident to understand why restrictive intervention was used, the impact on pupils and staff, any patterns and trends, and how another incident could be avoided in the future.

Our school will make sure each pupil and staff member involved get the right support, including a medical assessment and treatment if needed, and an opportunity to reflect on and talk through the incident.

These follow-up conversations will form part of the overall debriefing process to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from all parties involved. They should also aim to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue.

Wherever possible, this process will be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident. It may also include the presence of an additional person to ensure impartiality and support. The school will continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed.

Depending on the circumstances, support may also be offered to those who witnessed the incident.

10. Considerations for pupils with SEND

All pupils at Redbourn Park have SEND. We understand that pupils with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Pupils who have difficulty communicating verbally might show their needs and discomfort through their actions.

Our school is committed to understanding what might trigger challenging behaviour in pupils with SEND, and to providing the right support and an inclusive environment.

We will carry out risk assessments for pupils, where we identify that there is an increased likelihood of needing to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions. Our school is aware of its duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities to avoid disadvantage and ensure they can take part in school life as fully as possible.

We will utilise staff who know individual pupils well to help identify and manage risk, such as trigger points when challenging behaviour is more likely to occur, and develop proactive strategies to reduce the likelihood of restrictive interventions being used. We will also work with the pupil, their parents/carers and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

These strategies might include:

- Removing stimuli that may be causing distress to the pupil
- Staff members changing how they communicate with the pupil, such as being more mindful of body language, facial expressions and/or tone of voice
- Helping the pupil express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- Engaging the pupil in activities to help them regulate their emotions
- Distracting the pupil with familiar objects or activities to redirect their attention

Where appropriate, we will create individual behaviour support plans for pupils with SEND. The plan will be reviewed regularly, and following any significant incident, with the pupil and parents/carers to make sure it's still working well. The plan will:

- Outline any adjustments, such as to address aspects of the school environment which the pupil finds challenging
- Explain the best ways to communicate with the pupil

In some cases, specify when increased physical contact with staff might be appropriate. These situations will be discussed with everyone involved and clearly written down in the plan

11. Training and risk assessments

Our school will provide role-appropriate induction and refresher training for staff likely to use reasonable force or another restrictive intervention. Training will cover prevention and de-escalation, safe and lawful practice, medical contraindications, autism and sensory needs, trauma, communication and AAC, dignity, emergency action, and recording and reporting. Competence in any approved physical technique will be assessed and refreshed at intervals set by the training provider and following relevant incidents, changes in need or identified gaps.

We also have a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of our staff. Therefore, we carry out risk assessments to ensure that staff who regularly work alongside pupils where the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions may be required can do so as safely as possible.

12. Recording and reporting arrangements

We have a legal duty to record and report all:

- Significant incidents involving force
- Seclusion incidents
- Restraint incidents

12.1 Recording incidents

Our school has a clear process in place for recording the incidents listed above.

All incidents must be recorded in CPOMS as soon as practicable and, wherever possible, on the same day. The staff member must also notify the relevant Site Lead/DDSL and Jennifer Bryant as DSL immediately by direct communication; an automated CPOMS alert must not be relied on as the sole notification route.

The recording requirement applies even where an intervention is anticipated in an agreed behaviour support plan. Records must be factual, complete and made while events are fresh, without delaying immediate welfare, medical or safeguarding action.

For significant incidents involving force, we will record:

- The names of the pupil and staff members directly involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether they have an identified special educational need or disability, and their SEN status code
- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention

- A clear and brief description of what happened, including:
 - What led up to the incident
 - Any known or potential triggers for the behaviour
 - Any preventative or de-escalation strategies used
 - The type and degree of reasonable force used
 - Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- A brief explanation of why using force was assessed as necessary in that situation
- Details of any support given after the incident, such as medical help or emotional support

For seclusion incidents and restraint incidents, we will record:

- The names of the pupil and staff members directly involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether they have an identified special educational need or disability, and their SEN status code
- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- A brief explanation of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that situation
- Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- Details of any support given after the incident, such as medical help or emotional support

Note: if a seclusion or restraint incident also constitutes a significant incident involving force, we will record it in line with our procedure for recording significant incidents involving force. It does not need to be recorded twice.

Completed reports will be kept securely and retained in line with our data protection procedures.

12.2 Reporting incidents to parents/carers

When reporting an incident to parents/carers, we will inform parents/carers about an incident as soon as we can after it happens and will endeavour to do this on the same day. We will do this even if the use of restrictive interventions is agreed as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

There is one exception relevant to pupils at this school. If a member of staff considers that notifying the pupil's parents/carers is likely to result in serious harm to the pupil, the school will instead report the incident to any parent/carer who can be notified without resulting in significant harm to the pupil. If there is no parent/carer who can be told without resulting in significant harm, the school will report the incident to the local authority where the pupil ordinarily resides (see section 12.3 of this policy).

When we report significant incidents involving force to parents/carers, we will provide the following information in writing:

- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- A brief explanation of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that situation
- A short description of the type and degree of force that was used
- Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable

When we report seclusion incidents and restraint incidents to parents/carers, we will provide written information about the incident, including its location, the intervention used and why it was used.

Note: if a seclusion or restraint incident also constitutes a significant incident involving force, we will report it in line with our procedure for reporting significant incidents involving force. It does not need to be reported twice.

When reporting to parents/carers, we will have regard to data protection requirements when deciding what information to share. For example, we will not include any identifying details of any other pupil.

Following up with parents/carers after an incident

We will invite parents/carers to have a follow-up discussion about the incident, where appropriate.

The discussion might include:

- Any behavioural triggers or warning signs of an impending incident
- Whether any agreed behaviour support plans were followed
- What de-escalation strategies were used and how effective they were
- What might be done differently in the future

12.3 Reporting incidents to the local authority

In cases where we have assessed that an incident needs to be reported to the local authority where the pupil ordinarily resides (as outlined in section 12.2), this report will include all the information that we would normally share with the pupil's parents/carers, as well as the reasons why we thought it was unsafe to tell the pupil's parents/carers directly.

In cases where a pupil has parents/carers and is the subject of a care order under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 or is being accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, we will report the incident to the relevant local authority in addition to the parents/carers (unless we deem it unsafe to inform the parents/carers, as set out in section 12.2 of this policy).

13. Complaints and allegations

Any complaints about the use of restrictive interventions will be handled through our school's complaints policy, which you can find on our school website.

We take any allegation of inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions made against a member of staff very seriously. We will deal with allegations in line with the statutory safeguarding guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).

14. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by Jennifer Bryant as DSL with Joe Scales and Emily Giddens as Site Leads/DDSLs and acting-headteacher routes. Richard McCabe, as proprietor/chair, will approve it at every review.

15. Links with other policies

Related policies:

[Behaviour Policy](#)

[Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy](#)

[Complaints Policy](#)

[Health and Safety Policy](#)

[SEND Policy](#)