ISSR 7 - Restrictive Interventions, Use of Reasonable Force, and Physical Contact Policy

1 INTRODUCTION

This policy has been written with regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance: Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026) and KCSIE 2025 (pp. 45–46). It recognises 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. However, there are times when the use of restrictive interventions will be lawful and necessary; for example, to keep individuals and the wider school community safe.

The policy also covers Physical Contact to keep both staff and pupils safe and should be read alongside the school's Behaviour and Safeguarding Policies.

Staff are not expected to place themselves at risk of injury but may use appropriate physical contact or restraint when necessary to protect pupils or others.

2 PHYSICAL CONTACT

The school recognises that physical contact between staff and pupils can be appropriate and necessary in a range of everyday situations. 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 include:

- to give first aid
- to guide or escort pupils, such as for children in Year 3 and below, 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 selfregulate
- 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 (or any other relevant) policy
- the applicable circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present
- the individual pupil's age
- any other material factors, including but not limited to whether:
    - the pupil has SEND or other vulnerabilities
    - any alternative strategies that do not include physical contact can be used

Physical contact should never be secretive, gratuitous, or of a nature that could be misinterpreted by the pupil or others.

Staff are expected to use their professional judgement and, when in doubt, to seek guidance from the Head or DSL.

Any incident of concern or contact that may be misinterpreted should be recorded and reported to the DSL in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.

3 Restrictive Interventions

It is important to minimise the need to use restrictive interventions, such as through prevention and de-escalation. As a school, we aim to reduce the need for restrictive interventions through a combination of:

- consideration of how the 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

Individual approaches can include:

- working closely with parents to support individual pupils
- strategies to support individual pupils based on their identified needs, including the development of behaviour support plans. Where a pupil has a disability, schools have a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010 to support pupils with reasonable adjustments, making sure they can benefit from what the school offers
- giving pupils time, space and strategies to calm down before their behaviour escalates

Communicating the school's policy on the use of restrictive interventions to all members of the community is an important way of building and maintaining the school's culture and makes expectations transparent to all. School leadership should ensure that the policy is made available to all staff, pupils and parents.

3.1 Determining when use of restrictive interventions is appropriate

There will be times when school staff may need to use restrictive interventions, and they should know this option may be available to them. The decision on whether it is reasonable to use a restrictive intervention depends on the individual circumstances of each situation. To make this assessment, the member of staff should consider the following:

Is it necessary?

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

Is it 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 should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy.
- Staff should 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 2010.14

Have you considered the pupil's welfare?

- Staff should 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 should 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 should 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 should be used to ensure the pupil understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.
- 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.

This list of factors is not exhaustive, and staff should also take into account other relevant considerations. If an assessment has been made to use restrictive interventions, staff should be supported in their decision making.

3.2 Consideration for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

Some pupils with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Triggers may include pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar situations or environments or feelings of fear and anxiety. In particular, pupils who are

non-verbal or find verbal communication challenging may express their needs, discomfort or confusion through actions. This can lead to pupils with SEND being disproportionately subject to the use of restrictive interventions.

Staff should seek to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour so that they can provide proactive support, create an inclusive environment and consider the impact of school policies on pupils with SEND. For example, staff should consider how the school culture and environment may be experienced differently by pupils with SEND and seek to support pupils to cope with situations that they may find distressing.

The Head of Pastoral care should 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. They should also work with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

Depending on the circumstances, examples of strategies may include:

- removing stimuli that may be causing distress
- changing body language, facial expression, and/or tone of voice
- supporting the pupil to express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- engaging the pupil in an activity which can help them manage their feelings of anxiety
- distracting the pupil in something that interests them or by introducing familiar objects and activities to redirect their attention

Where appropriate, school staff should work with pupils with SEND and their parents in the co-production of any necessary behaviour support plans[1]. Behaviour support plans should outline any adjustments, such as to address aspects of the school environment which the pupil finds challenging and ways for pupils to communicate their needs effectively.

Where a pupil has a disability, the school has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to take reasonable steps to avoid disadvantage so that the pupil can fully participate in the education provided by the school, and that they can enjoy the other benefits, facilities and services that the school provides for pupils.

3.3 Pupil and staff support

Schools should evaluate all incidents involving the use of restrictive intervention as soon as practicable after the event to understand why it was used, the impact on pupils and staff, any patterns and trends, and how the use of restrictive interventions might be avoided in future, for example by amending or introducing a behaviour support plan.

Schools should also hold a follow-up conversation(s) to facilitate reflection, learning and to support pupil and staff wellbeing. This conversation should be framed as part of the overall debriefing

[1] Further information on Behaviour Support Plans can be found on Page 12 of the Department for Education's statutory guidance: Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026)

process and look to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from both the staff and pupils involved, as well as to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue. This process should ideally be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident and may also benefit from the presence of an additional person to ensure impartiality and support. By engaging in this process, schools can foster a culture of continuous improvement. Schools should continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed, for example through further follow-up conversations, counselling or other resources. Additionally, any pupil who witnesses an incident of restrictive intervention where a peer may have been injured or become distressed should also be provided with appropriate support where necessary.

4 Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving - should 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 should not be implemented by staff through threat of punishment. The place to which the pupil is confined should be safe and not feel threatening or intimidating to the pupil. The pupil should be supervised at all times during the period of seclusion. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil should be allowed to leave.

An incident involving the use of seclusion must be recorded and reported in accordance with the procedures outlined in the section below **Recording and reporting duties**.

Seclusion, as defined in this guidance, is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. There are disciplinary measures that are similar, such as removal from the classroom. Schools should refer to the Behaviour in schools guidance for further information on these and other disciplinary measures.

5 Recording and Reporting duties

Incidents in which a member of staff uses reasonable force or seclusion on a pupil must be recorded as described in 'Recording and reporting duties' in this document. In addition, any injuries should be recorded in accordance with the school's procedures and reported as appropriate to the Health and Safety Executive.

5.1 Recording the use of force (statutory guidance)

Each school's Advisory Board must ensure that there is a procedure in place for recording each significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil, as part of the school's duty under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable[2] after the event. It should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

The procedure must require that a record of any such incident is made in writing as soon as practicable after the incident. The requirement to record applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

In discharging their duty to have a procedure in place for recording use of force incidents, the governing body must have regard to this guidance and any other relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State for these purposes.

Schools should record the following details as a minimum:

- names of pupil and staff directly involved
- any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code
- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- brief account of the incident, including what led up to the incident, identified or potential triggers if known, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used, and (where relevant) what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of any physical injuries sustained
- brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance
- any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

Schools may also wish to record additional details to support their evaluation of incidents to identify best practices and areas for improvement. For example, the pupil's and/or witnesses' accounts of what happened, when and how parents were notified, and what follow-up has taken place.

5.2 Reporting the use of force (statutory guidance)

Each Schools Advisory Board must ensure that a procedure is in place for reporting each significant use of force to the parents of the pupil involved as soon as practicable after the incident, and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

There is an exception to the requirement to report where it appears to the staff member that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. In this instance, the staff member must report the incident to any parent(s) 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.

A report of the incident made to parents should include the following details as a minimum:

[2] It would be fair to not report the incident immediately if a member of staff had other important duties to perform, or pupil supervision. However, as outlined - it should be as soon as practicable, which as a minimum should be the same day of the incident.

- 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

It is the DSLs responsibility to report, and this applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

Schools should communicate this information to parents in writing via the DSL, or if directed by the DSL, a DDSL. This reporting should be in writing and sent via email even if the initial report is verbal. Best practice would include inviting parents to have a follow-up discussion about the incident where appropriate. This could involve a discussion about:

- 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

The school may use this information to amend any existing behaviour support plans, as needed.

In relation specifically to these reporting duties, 'parent' includes not only carers and persons with parental responsibility but also a local authority who are providing accommodation for the child under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

5.3 Recording and reporting the use of seclusion and non-force related restraint

Schools' Advisory Boards must ensure that a procedure is in place for recording each seclusion or restraint incident as part of the school's duty under the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025.

As outlined in these regulations, an incident of restraint may occur with or without direct physical contact. For restraint incidents that occur without direct physical contact, for example, the removal of a walking aid, these must be recorded under the procedures outlined in this section.

Incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event. It should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day. The record should then be sent to the DSL.

The procedure must require that a record of any such incident is made in writing as soon as practicable after the incident. The requirement to record applies even if the use of seclusion or restraint in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan. Schools should record the following details as a minimum:

- names of pupil and staff directly involved
- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code
- brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

Local Advisory Boards must ensure there is a procedure for supplying a copy of the written record of the seclusion or restraint incident to parents via the DSL.

Parents must be informed by the DSL or DDSL as soon as practicable after the incident and schools should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

There is an exception to the requirement to report where it appears to the staff member that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. In this instance, the staff member must report the incident to any parent(s) 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.

The requirement to inform parents applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan. Best practice would include inviting parents to have a follow-up discussion about the incident where appropriate. This could involve a discussion about:

- 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

The school may use this information to amend any existing behaviour support plans, as Needed.

In circumstances where a restraint incident also constitutes a significant use of force, schools only need to follow the reporting procedure for significant use of force incidents under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 as outlined above. The same information does not need to be reported twice. However, if a restraint incident does not constitute a significant incident of use of force, for example, the removal of a walking aid, this must be reported under the procedures outlined in this section.

6 Guidance for governing bodies and proprietors on using data

Council and the Advisory Board and proprietors should regularly review and interrogate data on restrictive interventions to ensure school leadership:

- identify and implement improvements to policies and practices, particularly where approaches have been used for some time but have not been effective.
- identify areas of learning and development for school staff, supporting specific departments and teachers to improve understanding and practice.
- understand pupils' repeat patterns and triggers to interrogate the effectiveness of pupil support measures, share this information with teachers who work with those pupils to better support them and, where appropriate, their parents, to establish a behaviour support plan or revise an existing plan.
- identify any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to pupils who share protected characteristics, have SEN, or other types of vulnerability.

Council and the Advisory Board should consider the limitations of data and what can be inferred from it. Analysis should be proportionate and avoid over-interpreting small subgroups of people.

4 Staff Training

Training on the use of restrictive interventions should equip staff to judge when it is appropriate to use restrictive interventions, including in situations where quick decisions are needed. It should also help staff understand how to assess whether their response is reasonable under pressure.

23rd March 2026	(ABS) Updated policy to reflect the Department for Education's new statutory guidance: Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026)

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