Connected Futures Partnership

Authoring our story.

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Restrictive Interventions, Physical Intervention and Reasonable Force Policy

SEPTEMBER 2026

Contribution | Challenge | Inclusivity | Aspiration

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This policy has been developed in accordance with the Department for Education guidance 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools', effective from 1 April 2026, section 93 and section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, and the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025. It should also be read alongside Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, the Equality Act 2010, the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Federation's safeguarding and behaviour policies.

Introduction

This policy on restrictive interventions is an integral but discrete element of the Federation's wider Behaviour Policy and safeguarding arrangements. It is underpinned by a positive school ethos in which pupils can expect dignified and respectful treatment, praise, support and an appropriate curriculum. Staff are expected to understand positive behaviour support, prevention, de-escalation and safe approaches. Restrictive interventions carry a risk of physical and psychological harm and should be avoided wherever possible.

The use of restrictive interventions must always be considered within the wider context of prevention, positive relationships, reasonable adjustments, diversion, de-escalation and negotiation. Any intervention must be lawful, necessary, proportionate, use no more force or restriction than is necessary, and last for the shortest possible time. This policy is based on the following principles:

- Restrictive intervention is avoided wherever possible and used only where it is necessary and proportionate in the circumstances.
- Any force or restriction used is no more than is necessary and is applied for the shortest possible time.
- Restrictive intervention is used in ways that seek to maintain the safety, dignity and welfare of all concerned and must never be used as punishment.
- Incidents are recorded in accordance with the statutory recording duties set out in this policy, as soon as practicable and ideally on the same day.
- Parents are informed in accordance with the statutory reporting duties set out in this policy, as soon as practicable and ideally on the same day.

The legal framework

Section 93 of the Education & Inspections Act 2006 allows ‘teachers and other persons who are authorised by the Executive Headteacher who have control or charge of pupils to use such force as is reasonable in all the circumstances to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- causing injury to his/herself or others;
- committing an offence;
- damaging property;
- causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Terminology and definitions

For clarity, this policy uses the following definitions from the April 2026 DfE guidance:

Restrictive intervention: a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This includes 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.

Significant incident: any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff. 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 either by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave.

Restraint: a non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact.

Definition of reasonable force and restraint

The DfE guidance 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools' (2026) defines and explains these terms in the following way:

- The term ‘reasonable force’ covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.
- Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a pupil needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.
- ‘Reasonable in the circumstances’ means using no more force than is needed for the least amount of time.
- Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil’s path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom.
- Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.
- School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the pupil.

The DfE guidance (2026) explains that reasonable force may be used in the limited circumstances permitted by law, including to prevent or stop a pupil from causing injury to themselves or others, committing a criminal offence, damaging property or causing disorder among pupils. Examples may include:

- remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow and instruction to do so;
- prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event, trip or a visit;
- prevent a pupil leaving the classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others;
- prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground; and
- restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described above, headteachers and authorised staff can use such force, as is reasonable given the circumstances, to conduct a search for the following ‘prohibited items’: knives and weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco and cigarette papers, fireworks, pornographic images and any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property.

It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment. Schools cannot use force as a punishment or to search for items banned under the school rules only.

Our approach

We aim to minimise the need for restrictive interventions through positive relationships, appropriate curriculum and environment, reasonable adjustments, prevention and de-escalation. Restrictive interventions are exceptional rather than routine and should be avoided wherever possible. This policy should be read alongside our Behaviour Principles, Behaviour Policy, SEND arrangements and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

It is not possible to define every circumstance in which reasonable force or another restrictive intervention may be necessary or appropriate. Staff must exercise professional judgement within the law and this policy. The key tests are whether the intervention is necessary and proportionate in the circumstances, whether less restrictive approaches are available and effective, and whether no more force or restriction is used than is necessary for the shortest possible time.

We do not have a 'no contact' policy. We do not grant requests by parents or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions, as this can leave staff unable to intervene where reasonable in the circumstances to fully protect pupils.

It is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a pupil is proper and necessary. Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper or necessary:

- Holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school or on a school trip.
- When comforting a distressed pupil.
- When a pupil is being congratulated or praised (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.
- To give first aid.
- To guide or escort pupils, such as when helping a pupil to a space they have chosen to access to self-regulate.

Staff are aware that when they are in charge of children during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are acting in loco parentis and have a ‘Duty of Care’ to all children they are in charge of. They therefore take reasonable action to ensure the safety and well-being of all pupils. This being said staff are not expected to place themselves in situations where they are likely to suffer injury as a result of their intervention.

Use of physical intervention

The use of physical intervention should, wherever possible, be avoided. It is an exceptional rather than routine method of management and should form part of a wider approach based on prevention, de-escalation and positive support.

Physical intervention is applied as an act of care and control with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the pupil to regain self-control. It never takes a form which could be seen as punishment. When physical intervention is used, it must maintain the safety and dignity of all concerned and must be in the best interest of the child/children.

The use of physical intervention should only be used to prevent:

- The child endangering themselves or others
- Severe damage to property that is likely to cause harm to the pupil or others

In the Connected Futures Partnership Federation, all staff are trained in the use of Team Teach strategies in the case of needing to physical intervene.

Definition of Team Teach

Team Teach is the positive application of force with the intention of protecting the child from harming themselves or others or seriously damaging property.

Why use Team Teach?

The Team Teach approach emphasises the need to look for the underlying reason for the dysregulation and for staff to take a proactive approach to manage it, deploying de-escalation strategies before considering physical intervention.

Team Teach strategies should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a child's action or perhaps by removing a physical object, which could be used to harm him / herself or others. It is only likely to be needed if a child appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and behaviour.

It is not possible to define every circumstance in which physical intervention would be necessary or appropriate and staff will have to exercise their own judgement in situations, which arise within the above categories. Staff should always act within their school's policy on behaviour and discipline, particularly in dealing with disruptive behaviour.

Staff should be aware that when they are in charge of children during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are acting in loco parentis and should, therefore, take reasonable action to ensure pupils' safety and well-being.

Failure to physically intervene with a pupil who is subsequently injured or injures another, could, in certain circumstances, lead to an accusation of negligence. At the same time, staff are not expected to place themselves in situations where they are likely to suffer injury because of their intervention.

Use of Physical Intervention

Physical intervention should be applied as an act of care and control with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the pupil to regain self-control. It should never take a form that could be seen as a punishment.

Staff are only authorised to use reasonable force in applying physical intervention, although there is no absolute definition of this, as what constitutes reasonable force depends upon the particular situation and the pupil to whom it is being applied. However, as a rule, only the force necessary to stop or prevent the behaviour should be used, in accordance with the guidelines below.

There are some forms of physical intervention, which may involve minimal physical contact, such as blocking a pupil's path or the staff member physically interposing him or herself between the pupil and another pupil or object. However, in some circumstances, direct physical contact may be necessary.

Other methods should be used where they are appropriate and effective. Where physical intervention is necessary, staff must use the least restrictive response that is safe and effective, using no more force than is necessary for the shortest possible time.

In the exceptional circumstances when physical intervention becomes necessary, staff:

Do	Don't
• Summon help / involve another member of staff if possible • Continue to talk to the pupil in a calm way • Use simple and clear language • Seek to maintain respect for the pupil's dignity • Where possible, clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening and why. • Seek to understand how the pupil is feeling. • Use the minimum force necessary for the shortest amount of time • Use only the agreed Team Teach strategies and holding methods • Be aware of any feelings of anger • Relax the restraint in response to the pupil's compliance • If unintentionally held on the ground, release holds or re-position to a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible).	• Try to manage on your own • Stop talking even if the pupil does not reply • Act in temper • Allow a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil • Involve other pupils in the restraint • Use physical intervention as a punishment • Touch or hold the pupil in a way that could be viewed as sexually inappropriate conduct • Twist or force limbs back against a joint • Bend fingers or pull hair • Restrain a pupil in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation (e.g., by covering the mouth/nose, or applying pressure to the neck region or abdomen) • Slap, punch, kick or trip up the pupil • Hold a pupil on the ground for longer than necessary

Seclusion

Seclusion - keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and preventing them from leaving - is a non-disciplinary intervention. It 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 must be necessary, proportionate and the least restrictive response to the immediate risk, and must never be implemented through threat of punishment.

The place used for seclusion must be safe and should not feel threatening or intimidating to the pupil. The pupil must be supervised at all times. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil must be allowed to leave.

Every incident involving seclusion must be recorded and reported in accordance with the statutory procedures in the 'Recording and reporting duties' section of this policy, including where its possible use has previously been agreed with parents as part of a behaviour support plan.

Seclusion is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. Disciplinary measures that may look superficially similar, such as supervised removal from the classroom, reflection rooms or internal exclusion, are governed by the Federation's Behaviour Policy and must not prevent a pupil from leaving by physical obstruction, blocking or threat of punishment.

Actions after an incident

Physical intervention often occurs in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for the staff involved and the pupil. A member of the leadership team should be informed verbally of any incident as soon as possible and all interventions should be recorded on the central CPOMS system (Child Protection Online Monitoring System) as soon as practicable, ideally the same day.

If appropriate, the pupil and staff member involved should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. Any injuries must be recorded in accordance with the school's procedures and reported as appropriate to the Executive Headteacher/Head of School and parents.

The senior leadership team will take responsibility for arranging for debriefing once the situation has stabilised. This should ideally be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident and may benefit from the presence of an additional person to ensure impartiality and support. An appropriate member of the teaching staff should always be involved in debriefing the pupil involved and any victims of the incident should be offered support, and their parents informed.

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.

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.

If the behaviour is part of an ongoing pattern, it will be necessary to address the situation through the development or review of an individual behaviour plan (IBP) (also referred to as a behaviour support plan), which may include a risk assessment and possible involvement of external agencies.

Recording and reporting duties

Recording significant use of force, seclusion and restraint
In accordance with section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, every significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil must be recorded. In accordance with the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025, every incident of seclusion or restraint must also be recorded, including restraint without direct physical contact. Where a restraint incident is also a significant use of force, the same information does not need to be recorded twice.

The written record must be made as soon as practicable after the event by the staff member(s) involved, who should endeavour to complete it no later than the same day. The duty applies even where the possible use of restrictive intervention has been agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan. Federation records will be held on CPOMS and/or the designated statutory record as appropriate.

The following details will be recorded as a minimum:

- Names of pupil and staff directly involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil 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 it, 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

We may also record additional details such as the pupil's and/or witnesses' accounts, when and how parents were notified, and what follow-up has taken place.

Reporting significant use of force, seclusion and restraint to parents
Every significant use of force and every incident of seclusion or restraint must be reported to parents as soon as practicable after the incident, and the Federation will endeavour to do so no later than the same day. The reporting duty applies even where the possible use of restrictive intervention has been agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan. Where a restraint incident also constitutes a significant use of force, it need only be reported once under the significant-use-of-force procedure.

Exceptions to the requirement to report are where:

- The pupil is aged 20 or over; or
- 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.

A report to parents will include the following details as a minimum:

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

The Federation will communicate the required information to parents in writing, for example by email or an appropriate online messaging system. Where practicable, an initial telephone call will also be made and parents will be invited to a follow-up discussion where appropriate.

A follow-up discussion may consider behavioural triggers or warning signs, whether an agreed behaviour support plan was followed, the de-escalation strategies used and their effectiveness, and what might be done differently in future.

The Federation will use learning from incidents to amend behaviour support plans, risk assessments, environmental adjustments or staff support and training where needed.

Risk Assessments

If we become aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, we will plan how to respond if the situation arises. Such planning (recorded on an IBP or behaviour support plan) addresses:

- Strategies to be used prior to intervention.
- Ways of avoiding 'triggers' if these are known.
- Involvement of parents to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might need to take.
- Briefing of staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training or guidance).
- Identification of additional support that can be summoned if appropriate.
- The school's duty of care to all pupils and staff.

Where appropriate, staff will work with pupils with SEND and their parents in the co-production of behaviour support plans. Plans should identify reasonable adjustments, aspects of the environment that the pupil finds challenging, communication needs, known triggers, preventative and de-escalation strategies, and the least restrictive approaches likely to support the pupil safely.

Behaviour support plans should detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil. This should be discussed in conjunction with relevant people, such as teachers, parents, the pupil, pastoral staff or health professionals, and parameters around its use stated clearly in the plan.

Any behaviour support plans should be reviewed with the pupil and their parent periodically and following any significant incident, so that changes can be made based on evidence of what has worked and what has not worked in practice for the individual pupil.

Governance, monitoring and use of data

The Governing Board will take reasonable steps to assure itself that the Federation's procedures for recording and reporting the use of force, seclusion and restraint are complied with. Leaders will

provide appropriately anonymised information to governors at least annually and sooner where patterns or serious concerns require oversight.

The Governing Board and senior leaders will regularly review and interrogate restrictive-intervention data to identify improvements to policy and practice, staff learning and development needs, repeated pupil patterns or triggers, the effectiveness of support plans and any disproportionate use affecting pupils with SEND, other vulnerabilities or protected characteristics. Analysis will be proportionate and will avoid over-interpreting very small groups.

Complaints and allegations

Any complaint regarding the use of restrictive interventions will be dealt with in accordance with the Federation's Complaints Procedure. Where an allegation concerns inappropriate use of force or another restrictive intervention by an adult working in or on behalf of the Federation, the procedures in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and the Federation's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

Where the concern may meet the harm threshold, or where there is doubt about the appropriate threshold, the Executive Headteacher/Head of School will follow the Federation's safeguarding procedures and seek advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) as appropriate.

The Federation will ensure that staff, pupils, parents and governors understand these procedures and the context in which they apply. The policy will be reviewed annually, and sooner where legislation or statutory guidance changes or learning from incidents indicates that revision is required.

Additional reading

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and guidance:

- Governor Statement of Behaviour Principles
- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Department for Education: Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (effective 1 April 2026)
- Department for Education: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Behaviour in Schools guidance