


Policy

Restrictive intervention, including use of reasonable force and other physical contact

Approved by:	Board of Trustees
Oversight by:	Designated Safeguarding Lead
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Relating to:	 DURHAM SIXTH FORM CENTRE

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Links with other policies:

This Policy is linked to:

- Climate for Learning Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- First Aid Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy

Please note, this is not an exhaustive list and does not include all school specific policies.

1. Introduction & purpose statement

- 1.1. The purpose of this Policy is to make clear the position of the Trust and its school with regards to physical interventions and to safeguard the well-being of students and staff when a situation or incident requires the use of physical intervention.
- 1.2. The Trust and school aim through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies to minimise the need to use restrictive interventions. It is the objective of the Trust and the school to maintain consistent and safe practices, ensuring that staff feel confident in knowing how to use interventions safely, appropriately and lawfully.

2. Legislation & guidance

- 2.1. This Policy is based on the Department for Education's guidance [Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools - April 2026](#).
- 2.2. This Policy is also underpinned and shaped by guidance and legislation including the Department for Education's guidance on [Searching, Screening and Confiscation Advice for Schools](#), the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) and [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#), the [Human Rights Act 1998](#) and duties outlined in the [Equality Act 2010](#).
- 2.3. The school has a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

3. Terminology

- 3.1. This Policy follows the Department for Education's definitions, as outlined in 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools':
 - **Restrictive intervention:** a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a student. The DfE guidance uses 'restrictive interventions' as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain students 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 students and staff as described in 'Other physical contact with students' within this Policy. This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.
 - **Seclusion:** a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a student 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 term used in legislation referring to a non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a student or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact. For example, holding a student's arms to their sides or removing a student's crutches would both be considered forms of restraint.
- 3.2. The above various interventions have, as per the DfE guidance, been defined for completeness.

4. Who can use reasonable force?

- 4.1. All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances which are to prevent or stop a student from:
- Causing injury to themselves or others.
 - Committing a criminal offence.
 - Damaging property.
 - Causing disorder among students at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

5. Determining when use of restrictive interventions is appropriate

- 5.1. The school is committed to minimising the need to use restriction interventions through prevention and de-escalation.
- 5.2. Whole school measures to minimise the need to use restrictive interventions include:
- Making this Policy available to all members of the school community, to ensure that our culture and expectations are transparent to all.
 - Establishing a positive behaviour culture through pastoral support, supportive transitions, support plans and warm yet professional relationships.
 - Creating a climate where positive interactions and support are inherent within relationships based upon consistency, care and clear expectations e.g. induction, assemblies and CORE.
 - Training staff to equip them with the skills and competencies to recognise, respond to and reduce the likelihood of the need of restrictive interventions.
 - Where necessary using environmental adjustments to promote student wellbeing, for example room changes.
 - Recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning.
- 5.3. Individual approaches to minimise the need to use restrictive interventions include:
- Working closely with parents/carers to support individual students.
 - Student-centred planning and procedures.
 - Strategies to support individual students based on their individual needs, including the development of support plans.
 - Using support plans where appropriate to promote positive behaviour, for example EHCP and Safety Plans.
 - Trauma informed care and planning, for example safety plans and tailored curriculum delivery.
 - Provision of an appropriate safe space, for example use of the quiet room.
 - Environmental adjustments, for example use of alternative exam rooms.
 - Giving students time, space and strategies to calm down before their behaviour escalates.
- 5.4. As per the DfE guidance, there are times when school staff may need to use restrictive interventions.
- 5.5. The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.

5.6. To make the 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 student such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.

Has the student's welfare been considered?

- Staff should consider the impact on the student's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. For example, students 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 student'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 student what is happening, why, and explain what the student needs to do.
- For students 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 student understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.
- Staff should seek to understand how the student is feeling and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

5.7. The above list of factors is not exhaustive and staff should also take into account any other considerations relevant to the circumstances.

5.8. Training (see section 10) will help equip staff to judge when it is appropriate to use restrictive interventions, including in situations where quick decisions are needed. It will also help staff understand how to assess whether their response is reasonable under pressure.

5.9. If an assessment has been made to use restrictive interventions, staff should be supported in their decision making.

6. Unacceptable use of force

- 6.1. It is illegal to use force on a student for the purpose of punishment.
- 6.2. Students should not be restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation, for example, by covering their mouth and/or nose, or applying pressure to the neck region or abdomen.
- 6.3. The use of force can be dangerous, particularly where it occurs on the ground. If a student 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.
- 6.4. Where appropriate, the student should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible.
- 6.5. For any form of restraint there is a risk of physical and psychological harm and it should be avoided where possible.

7. Consideration for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

- 7.1. The school has a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for students with SEND.
- 7.2. When considering the use of restrictive interventions, staff must take into account the individual needs of the student, including any medical conditions, sensory sensitivities or communication barriers.
- 7.3. For students with SEND, staff should:
 - Be aware that students with SEND may find physical contact particularly distressing or confusing and recognise that certain behaviours may be a result of the student's disability or a form of communication and seek to support students to cope with situations that they may find distressing.
 - Seek to identify and manage risk such as trigger points when challenging behaviour is more likely to occur in order to provide proactive support and create an inclusive environment.
 - Review Education, Health and Care Plans and review or develop support plans to ensure that any planned physical interventions are appropriate and safe for that individual student, working with relevant people such as the student, parents/carers, the SEND team and other professionals to develop effective strategies.
 - Put risk assessments in place and where possible, mitigate risks through training and prevention strategies, where there is an identified risk such as increased likelihood in the need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions.
 - Ensure that any support plans, Education, Health and Care Plans and risk assessments are reviewed periodically and following any significant incident, ensuring they are based on evidence of what has worked and what has not worked in practice for the individual student.
 - Consult with the SEND team to ensure staff are trained in proactive de-escalation strategies tailored to the student's requirements.
 - Continue to consider the impact of school policies on students with SEND.

- 7.4. Whether the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate will depend on the circumstances, irrespective of whether it has been considered as part of a support plan.
- 7.5. The school, Governors and Trustees will monitor the use of restrictive interventions to identify any disproportionate impact on students with SEND. This data will be reviewed on at least a termly basis to ensure that support measures are appropriate and trends are identified.

8. Student and staff support

- 8.1. Following an incident involving the use of restrictive intervention, the school will:
- 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 students and staff, any patterns and trends and how the use of restrictive interventions might be avoided in future.
 - Prioritise the immediate physical and emotional well-being of both the student and the staff member involved.
 - Provide a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries sustained by the student or staff as soon as possible. Any injuries should be recorded in accordance with the school's procedures and reported as appropriate to the Health and Safety Executive.
 - Hold a follow-up conversation(s) to facilitate reflection, learning and to support student and staff wellbeing. The meeting should be framed as part of the overall debriefing process and should look at what happened and why. It will adopt a restorative approach through dialogue where necessary, to ensure the staff-student relationship remains positive.
 - Ensure the student's parents/carers are notified of the serious incident, taking into account the degree of force used.
 - Record the incident in full detail on CPOMS as soon as possible, ensuring a chronological account is maintained for safeguarding purposes.
 - Review and update individual risk assessments, particularly for students with SEND, to identify triggers and improve future de-escalation strategies.
 - Analyse the incident data to identify any patterns or disproportionate use of intervention among specific student groups.
 - Continue to monitor the wellbeing of the student(s) and staff involved, including that of any witnesses to an incident of restrictive intervention, putting additional support in place where needed.

9. Use of reasonable force to search students

- 9.1. Principals and staff, including volunteers, 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.
- 9.2. Prohibited items are:
- Knives and weapons.
 - Alcohol.
 - Illegal drugs.
 - Stolen items.
 - Tobacco and cigarette papers.
 - Fireworks.
 - Pornographic images.

- Any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be used:
 - to commit an offence, or
 - to cause personal injury to, or damage to property of, any person.

10. Staff training

- 10.1. Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions are trained annually in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies. Staff training is on a needs basis, in response to the needs of individual students. Staff who may be required to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions will complete the following assessed qualifications via National College:
- Use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions (National College).
 - Certificate in Search & Seizure Awareness (National College).
- 10.2. Ensuring that training reflects the principles in the DfE guidance on restrictive interventions is a priority when choosing formal training providers.
- 10.3. Where needed, risk assessments are completed to ensure that staff that regularly work alongside students where the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions may be required can do so as safely as possible.
- 10.4. Staff training ensures that staff are informed where students have additional vulnerabilities, such as mental health conditions, medical conditions or SEND.
- 10.5. Additional training will be planned as appropriate with the SEND team where needed, for example, to ensure that support requirements outlined in Education, Health and Care Plans are met.

11. Recording the use of force

- 11.1. All incidents relating to the use of force by staff on a student will be recorded on CPOMS and a member of the Senior Leadership Team/Safeguarding Team informed.
- 11.2. The incident must be recorded on CPOMS as soon as practicable after the event. It should be recorded where possible by the staff member(s) involved and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.
- 11.3. The above requirement to record on CPOMS applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents/carers as part of a student's support plan.
- 11.4. The following details should be recorded, as a minimum:
- The names of the student(s) and staff directly involved.
 - Any relevant needs or circumstances of the student, including whether the student involved has an identified SEND and their SEN status code.
 - The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention.
 - A 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.

- A 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.
- Any additional details to support evaluation of incidents, to identify best practices and areas for improvement. This could include the student's and/or witnesses' accounts of what happened, when and how parents/carers were notified and what follow-up has occurred.

11.5. School safeguarding procedures must be followed, including external services being informed where appropriate, parents/carers being informed and a full and detailed chronology of the incident should be recorded on CPOMS as soon as possible following the incident.

12. Reporting the use of force

12.1. Any significant use of force will be reported to the parents/carers of the student(s) involved as soon as practicable after the incident. Where possible this should be no later than the same day.

12.2. Exceptions to the above requirement to report are where:

- The student is aged 20 or over.
- It appears to the staff member that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the student. In this instance, the staff member must report the incident to any parent(s)/carer(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 student is ordinarily resident.

12.3. A report of the incident made to parents/carers, which should be communicated in writing for example via email, should include the following details as a minimum:

- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention.
- A brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in this instance.
- A brief account of what type of force was applied and the degree of force.
- Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable.

12.4. Parents/carers will be invited to have a follow-up discussion about the incident where appropriate to reflect on lessons learned to help improve future support and practice.

12.5. The report to parents/carers outlined above will be made even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents/carers as part of a student's support plan. Following an incident, support plans will be reviewed and updated as needed.

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

13.1. All incidents of seclusion or restraint will be recorded on CPOMS and a member of the Senior Leadership Team/Safeguarding Team informed.

13.2. This includes all incidents of restraint that occur with or without direct physical contact.

13.3. The incident must be recorded on CPOMS as soon as practicable after the event. It should be recorded where possible by the staff member(s) involved and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

- 13.4. The above requirement to record on CPOMS applies even if the use of seclusion or restraint in certain circumstances is agreed with parents/carers as part of a student's support plan.
- 13.5. The following details should be recorded, as a minimum:
- The names of the student(s) and staff directly involved.
 - Any relevant needs or circumstances of the student, including whether the student involved has an identified SEND and their SEN status code.
 - The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention.
 - A 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.
- 13.6. Any incidents of seclusion or restraint will be reported to the parents/carers of the student(s) involved in writing as soon as practicable after the incident. Where possible this should be no later than the same day.
- 13.7. Exceptions to the above requirement to report are where:
- The student is aged 20 or over.
 - It appears to the staff member that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the student. In this instance, the staff member must report the incident to any parent(s)/carer(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 student is ordinarily resident.
- 13.8. Parents/carers will be invited to have a follow-up discussion about the incident where appropriate to reflect on lessons learned to help improve future support and practice.
- 13.9. The report to parents/carers outlined above will be made even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents/carers as part of a student's support plan. Following an incident, support plans will be reviewed and updated as needed.
- 13.10. Where a restraint incident also constitutes a significant use of force, staff only need to follow the reporting procedure for significant use of force incidents to avoid duplicating information. 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.

14. Complaints and allegations

- 14.1. All complaints should be directed to the Principal and the Complaints Procedure, available on the website [here](#), should be followed.
- 14.2. If an allegation regarding inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions is made against a member of staff, the procedures in Keeping Children Safe in Education will be followed. This includes the provisions regarding suspension of staff.

15. Other physical contact with students

- 15.1. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a student is proper and necessary. The DfE guidance states that schools should not have a 'no contact' policy and additionally that schools 'should not grant any requests by parents/carers or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions'. Staff should intervene where reasonable in the circumstances to fully protect students.
- 15.2. There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to have some physical contact with students which does not give rise to any question over the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions. This depends on circumstances but examples of occasions when physical contact is generally appropriate include:
- When comforting a distressed student.
 - When a student 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 sports lessons or coaching.
 - To give first aid.
- 15.3. In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in a given situation, the member of staff should use their judgement and have to regard to:
- The school's Safeguarding Policy.
 - The applicable circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present.
 - Any other material factors, including but not limited to whether:
 - The student has SEND or other vulnerabilities.
 - Any alternative strategies that do not include physical contact can be used.

16. Seclusion

- 16.1. Seclusion should only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a student is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. It should not be implemented by staff through threat of punishment.
- 16.2. The place in which a student is confined should be safe and not feel threatening or intimidating to the student.
- 16.3. The student should be supervised at all times during the period of seclusion. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the student should be allowed to leave.
- 16.4. Incidents involving the use of seclusion will be recorded and reported in accordance with DfE guidance.

17. Monitoring arrangements

- 17.1. Governors and Trustees will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the school's procedures for recording and reporting the use of force, seclusion and restraint are complied with.
- 17.2. This includes reviewing and interrogating on a termly basis anonymised data on restrictive interventions to ensure leaders:
- Identify and implement improvements to policies and practices as appropriate.

- Identify areas of learning and development for staff, to improve understanding and practice.
- Understand students' repeat patterns and triggers to interrogate the effectiveness of student support measures and ensure that this information is shared with teachers, to ensure appropriate, tailored support is put in place for students and that their parents/carers are communicated with as appropriate.
- Identify any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to students who share protected characteristics, have SEND, or other types of vulnerability.

17.3. In carrying out the above responsibility, Governors and Trustees will consider the limitations of data and what can be inferred from it. Analysis will be proportionate and avoid over-interpreting small subgroups of students.

17.4. This Policy will be reviewed by the Trust Board annually (or sooner if required).

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