



Use of Restrictive Intervention Policy

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1. Aims and scope

At North West Surrey Short Stay School, we are committed to creating a safe, predictable and relational environment where all pupils and staff feel supported, respected and understood.

We recognise that many of our pupils may have experienced trauma, adversity and disrupted relationships, which can impact how they communicate their needs and respond to stress. Behaviour is understood as a form of communication, and our approach prioritises understanding, co-regulation and relational safety.

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There are occasions where restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, may be lawful and necessary to prevent immediate harm. However, we recognise that such interventions can be distressing and potentially re-traumatising for pupils and impact staff and families.

For this reason, restrictive interventions are only ever used as a last resort, when there is an immediate risk of harm and all appropriate prevention and de-escalation strategies have been attempted or are not possible.

This policy aims to:

- Reduce the need for restrictive interventions through proactive, relational and trauma-informed practice
- Support staff to respond to distress and dysregulation in ways that are safe, attuned and proportionate
- Ensure staff feel confident in using restrictive interventions lawfully, safely and with minimal impact, only when absolutely necessary
- Clearly set out expectations for recording, reporting and reflecting on incidents
- Protect and promote the dignity, wellbeing and rights of all pupils and staff
- Support a culture of reflection, learning and continuous improvement following any incident

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](#)

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

- **Restrictive interventions** are used to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body or part of the body. Within our setting, we recognise that these interventions may be experienced as highly intrusive, particularly for pupils with a history of trauma. We therefore aim to use the least restrictive option, for the shortest time possible, and always alongside clear communication and relational support.

Examples of restrictive interventions could include:

- Supervised seclusion of a pupil in an area away from others, where the pupil is prevented from leaving for their own safety and/or the safety of others
- 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.

Examples of the use of reasonable force could include:

- A staff member guiding a pupil to safety by the arm
- Staff breaking up a fight between pupils
- A staff member restraining a pupil to prevent injury to the pupil, or others

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

Examples could include:

- A staff member holding a pupil's arms to their sides when the pupil is attempting to harm themselves or others
- Removing a pupil's crutches

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- **Seclusion** is a non-disciplinary intervention that involves a pupil being in a space away from others and not being free to leave, for reasons of safety.

In our school:

- Seclusion is used only in response to high levels of distress or dysregulation, where there is a clear and immediate risk of harm
- It is never used as a punishment, threat or behavioural sanction
- We recognise that separation can be experienced as distressing or triggering, and therefore use it with extreme caution

During any period of seclusion:

- The environment will be calm, safe and as non-threatening as possible
- The pupil will be continuously supervised by a known adult wherever possible
- Staff will prioritise co-regulation, reassurance and emotional safety
- The pupil will be supported to return as soon as they are able to do so safely

All incidents will be recorded and followed by reflection and relational repair.

See section 3.2 of this policy for more information on seclusion.

- 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.

See section 3.1 of this policy for more information on appropriate physical contact.

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
- 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

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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
- Our school's relationship and behaviour 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 whether the pupil has special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
 - Whether any alternative strategies that don't involve physical contact can be used

3.2 Seclusion

As defined above, seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention that keeps a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevents them from leaving, for the safety of that pupil and/or others. This could be through physical obstruction or by making the pupil believe that they will be punished if they leave. For example, putting a pupil into a 'holding' room, or remaining outside with them until they calm down is a form of seclusion.

We only use seclusion as a safety measure when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. Seclusion is not used as a threat or punishment. Seclusion is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. Please see our relationship and behaviour policy for information on our response to misbehaviour.

During seclusion:

- The pupil will be secluded in a safe place that does not feel threatening or intimidating to them this can include being outside.
- The pupil will be supervised at all times, by at least 1 member of staff. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil will be allowed to leave/return.

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 Management Committee

The management committee is responsible for:

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- 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 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall implementation and oversight of this policy
- 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 staff to search a pupil or their belongings if they have good reason to think the pupil has a prohibited or banned item
- 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 every seclusion incident, restraint incident and significant incident involving force that they are involved in
- Reporting these incidents to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL)
- 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 conversation(s) to debrief and reflect on incidents involving restrictive intervention that they were involved in, to help us understand what happened and why

4.4 Designated safeguarding lead (DSL)

The DSL is responsible for:

- Reporting every seclusion incident, restraint incident and significant incident involving force to each parent/carer of the pupil involved
- Making sure records are kept securely and in accordance with safeguarding and data protection procedures
- Contacting the local authority in cases where informing a pupil's parent/carer of the use of reasonable force, seclusion or restraint on their child would put that child at risk of significant harm (see sections 12.2 and 12.3 of this policy)

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

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- 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 staff are adequately trained and that risk assessments are carried out where necessary. See section 11 of this policy for information on training and risk assessments.

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.

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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 headteacher and any member of staff authorised by the headteacher have a statutory power to search a pupil or their belongings if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item (as listed in the DfE's [searching, screening and confiscation guidance](#)) or an item banned under our school rules.

They **can** use reasonable force to search for prohibited items (as listed in the DfE's searching, screening and confiscation guidance), such as knives, weapons, stolen items or illegal drugs. They **cannot** use reasonable force to search for items that are banned under our school rules only, such as mobile phones.

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 always a last resort. Our primary focus is on prevention, early intervention and relational practice.

We adopt a trauma-informed, attachment-aware approach, recognising that:

- Dysregulation is often a response to overwhelm, fear or unmet need
- Pupils may require support with co-regulation before they can self-regulate
- Relationships are central to safety, engagement and behaviour change

Whole-school approach

Our whole-school practice includes:

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- Creating predictable, structured and emotionally safe environments
- Developing strong, consistent relationships between staff and pupils
- Using emotionally attuned communication, including tone, pacing and body language
- Recognising and responding to early signs of distress
- Regular reflection on data to identify patterns, triggers and unmet needs
- Promoting a culture of curiosity rather than blame

Individual approaches

We:

- Work collaboratively with pupils and families to understand individual experiences and needs
- Develop individual regulation and support plans
- Identify triggers, stressors and protective factors
- Use reasonable adjustments to reduce distress and increase accessibility
- Support pupils to develop emotional literacy and regulation strategies over time

8.1 De-escalation

When a pupil is becoming dysregulated, staff will prioritise de-escalation and co-regulation.

This may include:

- Maintaining a calm, regulated presence
- Using non-threatening body language and respecting personal space
- Reducing demands where appropriate
- Removing the pupil from overwhelming environments or audiences
- Using curiosity and empathy (e.g. “I can see something’s not right—how can I help?”)
- Offering choices to support a sense of control and safety
- Providing access to a safe, familiar space
- Allowing time for processing and recovery

Staff understand that language, tone and relational approach are key tools in preventing escalation

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

The safety and wellbeing of all pupils and staff is paramount. However, we recognise that restrictive interventions can have a lasting emotional impact, particularly for pupils who have experienced trauma.

Staff will:

- Prioritise the pupil's dignity, emotional safety and sense of control
- Communicate clearly and calmly throughout any intervention
- Be attentive to signs of distress, fear or escalation
- Adapt or stop the intervention if it is increasing harm or distress

We acknowledge that pupils may experience restrictive intervention as:

- Loss of control
- Fear or threat
- Re-enactment of past trauma

This understanding informs our commitment to minimise use and prioritise relational repair.

Support following an incident

Following any incident, we will prioritise:

- Emotional recovery and regulation for the pupil
- Relational repair between pupil and staff
- Opportunities for the pupil to share their perspective safely
- Reflection focused on understanding, not blame

Debrief processes will:

- Be trauma-informed and non-judgemental
- Explore triggers, unmet needs and alternative strategies
- Support staff wellbeing and reflective practice

Where appropriate, support will also be offered to witnesses, recognising the wider impact of incidents.

10. Considerations for pupils with SEND

We recognise that pupils with SEND are disproportionately vulnerable to experiencing distress and restrictive interventions, particularly where communication or sensory needs are unmet.

Our approach prioritises:

- Understanding behaviour as communication
- Identifying sensory, communication and emotional needs
- Adapting environments and expectations to reduce overwhelm
- Working collaboratively with families and professionals

We aim to reduce the likelihood of crisis through proactive, personalised support.

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.

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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 with SEND, 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 regulation 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 make sure that all staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions are adequately trained in their safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies.

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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 (see section 3 of this policy for a definition of ‘significant incident’)
- Seclusion incidents
- Restraint incidents

12.1 Recording incidents

Our school has a clear process in place for recording the incidents listed above. The incident that required intervention will be recorded in Arbor, the type of intervention will be included in this incident log.

Staff must record incidents in writing, as soon as possible after the event, and should endeavour to do this on the same day. Staff should do this even if the use of restrictive interventions is agreed as part of a pupil’s behaviour support plan.

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
 - Names of witnesses

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- 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
- Record of communication with parents in Arbor

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
- Record of communication with parents in Arbor

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 take the following steps:

A member of SLT will make a telephone call to parent that day. If the parent does not answer, an email will be sent detailing the information of the incident.

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 to this:

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- If a member of staff thinks that telling the pupil's parents/carers would likely result in significant harm to that pupil. In these cases, we will 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 where the pupil ordinarily resides (see section 12.3 of this policy)

When we report **significant incidents involving force** to parents/carers, we will include the following details:

- 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 parents/carers with a copy of our written record of the incident.

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

The school 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 regulation 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.

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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 the 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 the headteacher.

At every review, this policy will be approved by The Management Committee.

15. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Relationship and Behaviour policy
- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Complaints policy
- Health and safety policy
- SEND policy