



Whitehall School

Restrictive Interventions, Including the Use of Reasonable Force Policy

Happiness at the heart of learning

Approved by: WS Full Governing Board

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Next review due by: Autumn 2027

1. Aims

At Whitehall School, the safety and welfare of pupils and staff is a priority. The school is committed to creating a calm, safe, supportive and inclusive environment in which pupils can learn, develop and thrive.

The aims of this policy are:

- To maintain the safety and welfare of pupils, staff and others within the school community.
- To promote positive behaviour through prevention, early support, positive relationships and effective de-escalation.
- To minimise the need for restrictive interventions wherever reasonably possible.
- To ensure that, where restrictive intervention is necessary, it is used safely, lawfully, reasonably, proportionately and for the shortest time necessary.
- To ensure that restrictive interventions are never used as a punishment.
- To ensure that staff understand their legal responsibilities and the circumstances in which reasonable force may lawfully be used.
- To ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and pupils with other vulnerabilities, are appropriately supported and that reasonable adjustments are made where required.
- To ensure that all significant uses of force, and all relevant seclusion and restraint incidents, are appropriately recorded, reported, reviewed and used to inform future practice.
- To ensure that restrictive interventions are considered within the school's wider safeguarding, behaviour and child protection arrangements.

This policy has been prepared for the guidance and support of all teaching and support staff and has regard to the Department for Education's **Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools** guidance, effective from 1 April 2026.

The policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Equality Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Individual Behaviour Support Plans and risk assessments, where applicable.

The policy should be accessible and available to staff, pupils and parents.

The Headteacher, or their designated deputy, will ensure that staff understand their responsibilities under this policy as part of induction and ongoing training. This will include the school's expectations regarding positive behaviour management, prevention, de-escalation, safeguarding and the use of restrictive interventions.

At Whitehall School, we want everyone to feel safe, happy and successful. Our Behaviour Policy sets out the school's graduated approach to supporting positive behaviour and responding to behaviour that presents a concern.

2. Terminology

For the purposes of this policy:

Restrictive intervention means an intervention intended to prevent, restrict or subdue the movement of a pupil's body or part of their body. It is an umbrella term covering physical and non-physical interventions.

Reasonable force is a legal term which includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances. Reasonable force means using no more force than is necessary and for the least amount of time necessary, having regard to the circumstances of the individual incident.

Significant incident means an incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff. This includes circumstances where physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

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

Seclusion means a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and preventing them from leaving, including by physical obstruction, blocking or causing the pupil to believe they will be punished if they leave.

The use of these terms does not imply that an intervention is appropriate. Any restrictive intervention must be considered in accordance with this policy and the circumstances of the individual incident.

3. Who Can Use Reasonable Force and When?

Staff authorised to use reasonable force

All members of school staff have a legal power under **section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006** to use reasonable force in specified circumstances.

Reasonable force may be used to prevent or stop a pupil from:

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

The power applies to members of school staff and other people authorised by the school to have control or charge of pupils.

The fact that a member of staff has the legal power to use reasonable force does not mean that force should routinely be used. The circumstances of every incident must be considered individually.

Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions should receive appropriate training in their safe and lawful use and in preventative and de-escalation strategies. The Headteacher will determine training requirements according to the school's context and the needs and risks identified within the school.

In an emergency, staff should act in accordance with their duty of care and this policy. The fact that a member of staff has not undertaken formal restrictive-intervention training does not remove their responsibility to take reasonable action to protect a pupil or another person from immediate harm.

Deciding whether to use a restrictive intervention

Restrictive intervention should be avoided wherever possible and should not be used simply because a pupil is displaying challenging behaviour or has breached a school rule.

Before using a restrictive intervention, staff should consider:

Is it necessary?

- Are there other, less restrictive ways of managing the situation?
- Is the intervention likely to reduce the relevant risk?
- Could the intervention escalate the situation or cause more harm than the behaviour itself?

Is it proportionate?

- Is the least restrictive intervention being used?
- Is the minimum amount of force necessary being used?
- Is it being used for the shortest time necessary?
- Is the response proportionate to the risk presented?

Has the pupil's welfare been considered?

Staff should take account of the pupil's individual circumstances, including:

- age and size;
- special educational needs and/or disabilities;
- communication needs;
- medical conditions;
- sensory needs;
- other vulnerabilities;
- known triggers;
- previous trauma or adverse experiences, where known;
- the potential impact on the pupil's dignity and wellbeing; and
- relevant considerations under the Equality Act 2010.

Where possible, staff should communicate calmly with the pupil about what is happening, why it is happening and what the pupil needs to do.

Staff should continually reassess the situation. If the intervention is escalating the situation, staff should consider an alternative approach and reduce or stop the intervention as soon as it is safe to do so.

Force must never be used as punishment

It is unlawful to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment.

Restrictive interventions must never be used to humiliate, intimidate, discipline or punish a pupil.

Physical intervention is not a substitute for effective behaviour management, appropriate SEND provision, safeguarding practice or other professional approaches to supporting pupils.

4. Prevention, De-escalation and Individual Support

The school will seek to minimise the need for restrictive interventions through effective prevention, positive relationships and de-escalation.

Whole-school approaches include:

- establishing positive relationships between staff and pupils;
- consistent implementation of the Behaviour Policy;
- effective classroom and environmental management;
- appropriate communication and use of tone of voice;
- recognising and responding to early signs of distress;
- giving pupils appropriate time and space to regulate;
- providing opportunities for pupils to communicate their needs;
- identifying and reducing environmental triggers where possible; and
- regularly reviewing data relating to restrictive interventions to identify patterns and opportunities for improvement.

Where an individual pupil is identified as being at increased risk of requiring restrictive intervention, the school should work with the pupil, parents/carers and, where appropriate, relevant professionals to develop proactive strategies.

This may include an Individual Behaviour Support Plan and/or risk assessment.

Such plans should identify, where known:

- potential triggers and early warning signs;
- preventative strategies;
- reasonable adjustments;
- communication strategies;
- de-escalation approaches;
- strategies which help the pupil to regulate;
- circumstances in which increased physical contact may be appropriate;
- the circumstances in which reasonable force or another restrictive intervention may become necessary; and
- post-incident support and review arrangements.

Where a pupil has SEND, the school will consider the pupil's individual needs and its duties under the Equality Act 2010. Reasonable adjustments will be made where required.

Behaviour Support Plans should be developed, where appropriate, with the pupil and their parents/carers and relevant professionals. They should be reviewed periodically and following any significant incident to identify what worked, what did not work and what changes are required.

The existence of an agreed Behaviour Support Plan does not automatically make the use of restrictive intervention appropriate. The decision must always be based on the circumstances of the particular incident.

5. Using Force

Positive behaviour strategies and de-escalation should be used wherever possible.

Staff should use restrictive intervention only where they consider it necessary, reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances.

Where reasonably practicable, staff should:

- remain calm;
- use a measured tone;
- give the pupil clear instructions;
- provide an opportunity for the pupil to change their behaviour;
- seek assistance from another member of staff where appropriate;
- consider the safety of other pupils and staff; and
- use the least restrictive response necessary.

Staff should not act out of anger, frustration or a desire to punish.

Any physical intervention must be reduced and stopped as soon as the immediate risk has reduced sufficiently for it to be safe to do so.

The school will ensure that staff who are likely to need to use restrictive interventions have access to appropriate training. Where formal physical intervention training is provided, the school will identify an appropriate recognised training programme and maintain appropriate training records.

Staff must only use physical techniques that are consistent with their training, where such training has been provided, except where immediate action is required to protect a person from harm.

Unacceptable uses of force

Staff must not use force:

- as a punishment;
- to humiliate or intimidate a pupil;
- to obtain compliance where there is no relevant safety risk;
- in a way that deliberately affects a pupil's airway, breathing or circulation;
- by covering the pupil's mouth or nose;
- by applying pressure to the neck or abdomen; or
- in any other manner prohibited by law or the staff member's training.

Where a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release or reposition the pupil into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.

Where appropriate, the pupil should receive medical assessment and treatment following an incident.

Any injury to a pupil or staff member must be dealt with in accordance with the school's first-aid, health and safety and incident-reporting procedures.

6. Appropriate Physical Contact

The school does not operate a blanket "no contact" policy.

There are circumstances in which appropriate physical contact with pupils does not constitute the use of reasonable force or a restrictive intervention. Examples include:

- providing first aid;
- guiding or escorting a pupil;
- holding a pupil's hand where appropriate;
- helping a pupil access a space they have chosen for self-regulation;
- comforting a distressed pupil;
- congratulating or praising a pupil;
- demonstrating musical instruments;
- demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE; and
- providing other appropriate care or support.

Staff must use professional judgement and consider the pupil's age, individual circumstances, SEND and vulnerabilities, the presence of other adults, the school's safeguarding procedures and whether a non-contact alternative is available.

7. Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary safety intervention and is distinct from the use of removal from a classroom as a disciplinary measure.

Seclusion 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.

Seclusion must not be used:

- as a punishment;
- to discipline deliberate or wilful misbehaviour;
- as a threat;

- to force compliance; or
- simply because a pupil refuses to follow an instruction.

Where seclusion is necessary:

- the area must be safe and not threatening or intimidating;
- the pupil must be supervised at all times;
- staff should continue to monitor the pupil's welfare;
- staff should communicate calmly with the pupil where possible; and
- the pupil should be allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced.

Every seclusion incident must be recorded and reported in accordance with the school's recording and reporting procedures.

8. Recording and Reporting Incidents

The school has procedures for recording:

1. each **significant incident involving the use of force** by a member of staff on a pupil; and
2. each **seclusion or restraint incident**, including restraint that does not involve direct physical contact.

Records must be made in writing as soon as practicable after the incident. Staff involved should endeavour to complete the record on the same day.

Recording is required even where the use of a restrictive intervention has previously been agreed with parents/carers as part of an individual Behaviour Support Plan.

Information to be recorded

The record should include, as a minimum:

- the name of the pupil;
- the names of staff directly involved;
- the date and time;
- the location;
- the approximate duration;
- relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including identified SEND and SEN status code where applicable;
- what happened immediately before and during the incident;
- known or potential triggers;
- preventative and de-escalation strategies used;
- why the intervention was considered necessary;

- the type and degree of force used, where applicable;
- any physical injuries sustained;
- any medical treatment provided;
- post-incident support; and
- any other relevant information required to understand and review the incident.

Where appropriate, the school may also record the pupil's account, witness accounts, when parents were informed and any subsequent review or follow-up.

Records must be handled securely and confidentially and in accordance with the school's data protection and safeguarding procedures.

Reporting to parents

Each significant use of force must be reported to the pupil's parent(s) as soon as practicable after the incident, and the school should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

The report should normally be provided in writing and should include, as a minimum:

- the date, time and location;
- the approximate duration;
- why the intervention was considered necessary;
- the type and degree of force used; and
- details of any physical injuries sustained.

Parents should, where appropriate, be offered a follow-up discussion to consider:

- triggers or warning signs;
- whether the pupil's Behaviour Support Plan was followed;
- which de-escalation strategies were effective;
- the pupil's experience;
- what could be done differently in future; and
- whether the pupil's support plan requires amendment.

The same reporting principles apply to relevant seclusion and restraint incidents.

The statutory exceptions to reporting apply where:

- the pupil is aged 20 or over; or
- it appears that informing a particular parent would be likely to result in significant harm to the pupil.

Where information cannot safely be provided to any parent, the incident must be reported to the local authority within whose area the pupil ordinarily resides, in accordance with the statutory requirements.

Where a pupil is looked after, the school will also follow the relevant safeguarding and looked-after-child procedures and ensure that appropriate professionals, including the child's social worker where required, are informed.

9. Safeguarding Considerations

The use of restrictive intervention is a safeguarding matter and must be considered within the school's child protection procedures.

All staff must follow the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and report safeguarding concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or deputy without delay.

A restrictive intervention may raise a safeguarding concern where, for example:

- the use of force appears unnecessary, excessive or disproportionate;
- a prohibited technique may have been used;
- a pupil is injured;
- a pupil reports that they have been harmed;
- there is a concern about repeated or escalating use of restrictive intervention;
- there are concerns about a staff member's conduct; or
- the incident indicates that a pupil may have an unmet safeguarding, SEND, medical, communication or emotional need.

KCSIE 2026 requires staff to act immediately on safeguarding concerns and to follow the school's safeguarding procedures. Concerns about adults working in or on behalf of the school must also be dealt with in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures, including where the concern does not meet the threshold for an allegation that may have harmed a child.

10. Post-Incident Support and Review

For pupils

Following an incident, the pupil should be given appropriate support and an opportunity, at a developmentally appropriate level, to reflect on what happened.

The focus should be on:

- understanding what happened;
- identifying triggers and early warning signs;
- supporting emotional regulation;
- repairing relationships;
- identifying safer alternatives;
- ensuring the pupil feels safe; and
- learning what may help prevent a similar incident.

The pupil should not be subjected to a punitive response simply because a restrictive intervention has been used.

The pupil's wellbeing should be monitored following the incident. Where necessary, appropriate medical or emotional support should be provided.

Pupils who witness an incident and become distressed should also receive appropriate support.

For staff

Staff involved in an incident should be provided with appropriate support and an opportunity to debrief.

Where possible, the follow-up process should be facilitated by a member of staff who was not directly involved in the incident.

Debriefing should consider:

- what happened;
- why the intervention was necessary;
- whether de-escalation strategies were effective;
- the impact on the pupil and staff;
- whether injuries occurred;
- whether the Behaviour Support Plan was followed;
- whether safeguarding concerns arise;
- whether any changes to practice are required; and
- whether further support is needed.

Staff should have access to appropriate wellbeing support, including counselling or other support available through the school or local authority.

Any staff injuries must be recorded and managed in accordance with the school's health and safety procedures.

11. Dealing with Distressed or Angry Parents

When dealing with potentially difficult or emotionally charged conversations with parents/carers, staff should:

- listen to the parent's point of view;
- acknowledge their concerns;
- use calm, respectful and non-confrontational language;
- provide factual information about what happened;
- explain the school's safeguarding and behaviour procedures;
- seek to agree a constructive way forward;
- invite the parent to discuss strategies that may support the pupil;
- ask another colleague or member of the leadership team to attend where appropriate; and
- report any concerns about aggressive, threatening or inappropriate behaviour to the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Parents should be given an appropriate opportunity to raise concerns or make a complaint in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy.

12. Complaints, Allegations and Low-Level Concerns

Pupils and parents/carers have the right to raise concerns or make a complaint about the actions of school staff, including the use of force or other restrictive interventions.

Where a concern or allegation relates to the safeguarding or welfare of a child, the Headteacher and/or DSL will follow the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the procedures set out in **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026** and the relevant local authority arrangements.

Where an allegation about a member of staff may meet the relevant safeguarding threshold, the school will follow the appropriate procedure, including seeking advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where required.

Concerns that do not meet the threshold for a formal allegation must not simply be disregarded. They should be considered and managed under the school's procedures for **low-level concerns about staff**, in accordance with KCSIE 2026.

All concerns and allegations about staff must be handled fairly, promptly, confidentially and in accordance with safeguarding and employment procedures.

Staff have a professional responsibility to report concerns about the conduct or practice of colleagues. Staff should feel confident that concerns will be taken seriously and addressed appropriately.

Where a member of staff has a safeguarding concern about practice within the school and feels unable to raise it through the normal internal arrangements, the school's Whistleblowing Policy should be followed.

13. Monitoring, Review and Use of Data

The school will monitor the use of restrictive interventions to identify:

- frequency and patterns of use;
- circumstances and locations in which incidents occur;
- triggers and contributing factors;
- the impact on individual pupils;
- whether particular pupils are disproportionately subject to restrictive interventions;
- whether SEND or other vulnerabilities are relevant;
- whether existing Behaviour Support Plans remain appropriate;
- the effectiveness of prevention and de-escalation strategies; and
- opportunities to reduce or eliminate the need for restrictive interventions.

The Senior Leadership Team will review incidents regularly.

The Headteacher will provide the Governing Body with an appropriate termly summary of incidents involving restrictive interventions, including relevant trends and actions taken to reduce their use.

The Governing Body will use this information to support oversight, safeguarding, equality, health and safety and continuous improvement.

Where the review identifies a concern about practice, appropriate action will be taken, which may include:

- additional staff training;
 - changes to supervision;
 - changes to the environment;
 - amendments to the Behaviour Policy;
 - review of an individual pupil's support;
 - additional safeguarding action; or
 - referral to relevant external professionals.
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14. Legal and Policy Framework

This policy has regard to the following legislation and guidance:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, including sections 93 and 93A;
- Education Act 1996;
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- **Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools**, Department for Education, April 2026;
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026**, Department for Education, in force from 1 September 2026;
- the school's Behaviour Policy;
- the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy; and
- relevant local authority safeguarding procedures.

This policy replaces the school's previous references to the 2013 **Use of Reasonable Force in Schools** guidance.

The school will review this policy regularly and following any significant change in legislation, statutory guidance or local safeguarding procedures.