Use of Restrictive interventions and Reasonable Force policy 2026-2027

All staff in Ropery Walk Primary School recognise that the use of reasonable force is only one of the strategies available to secure pupil safety/well-being.
Our policy on the use of restrictive intervention and reasonable force is part of our overall pastoral care procedures.
This policy should be read in conjunction with associated policies: (please amend as appropriate)

- Behaviour policy
- Searching, screening and confiscation policy
- Safeguarding and child protection policy

Legal Framework

The DfE Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools Guidance for schools in England 2026 allows all staff at a school to use reasonable force to keep children safe. It also allows other adults in the school to use physical interventions, where reasonable, proportionate and necessary to ensure the safety of children.

The right for school staff to use reasonable force is further set out in the DFE document Behaviour in Schools, which states that members of staff have the power to use reasonable force to prevent or stop a pupil from:

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

Positive Handling should only be used when all other strategies which do not employ force have been tried and found unsuccessful, or in an emergency situation. It should be avoided where possible.

Reasonable minimal force must be a matter of personal judgement. All teachers have a professional 'duty of care' within their job description, which is underwritten by the Department of Education Teacher Standards.

Staff who are **likely to need** to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions will be adequately trained in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies.

Terminology used in this guidance and the DfE policy can be found in Appendix B

Communicating the school's approach to the use of force
DFE guidance states:

- Schools do not require parental consent to use force on a pupil.
- Schools should not have a 'no contact' policy. There is a real risk that such a policy might place a member of staff in breach of their duty of care towards a pupil, or prevent them from taking action needed to prevent a pupil from causing harm.
- There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to have some physical contact with pupils which does not give rise to any question over the use of reasonable force and other restrictive

interventions. This will depend on the circumstance, but examples of occasions when physical contact is generally appropriate include:

- to administer first aid
- to guide or escort pupils, such as holding the hand of a pupil at the front/back of the line when going to assembly, when walking together around the school or on a school trip, or when helping a pupil to a space they have chosen to access to self-regulate
- to comfort a distressed pupil

Determining when use of restrictive interventions is appropriate

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

To make this assessment, the member of staff should consider the following:

Is it necessary?

• Staff should consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation and assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks.

• Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.

Is it proportionate?

• Staff should use the **least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required** to reduce the relevant risks.

• If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy.

• Staff should consider the personal circumstances of the pupil such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.

Have you considered the pupil's welfare?

• Staff should consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. For example, pupils who have experienced an adverse life event, with diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments past trauma or neglect, communication difficulties, or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.

• Staff should seek to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity. This may include, where possible, considering the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.

• Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and explain what the pupil needs to do.

• For pupils with difficulties with speech, language and communication, or with English as an additional language, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies should be used to ensure the pupil understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.

• Staff should seek to understand how the pupil is feeling and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

This list of factors is not exhaustive, and staff should also take into account other relevant considerations.

We will always look to minimise the need to use restrictive interventions, such as through prevention, de-escalation, and approaches for individual pupils.

Whole-school measures include:

• consideration of how the school and classroom environment can support all pupils to achieve and thrive
• sharing best practice for whole-class behaviour management, and for managing communal spaces such as corridors and playgrounds
• training staff in effective communication strategies, such as using an appropriate tone of voice and empathy to aid de-escalation
• development of working staff-pupil relationships and trust
• recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning and individual risk assessment/support plans

Schools cannot use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

Power to search pupils without consent

In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described above, Head teachers and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable, given the circumstances to conduct a search for "legally prohibited items."

Searches will be conducted in line with the statutory Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools guidance

Risk assessment/support plan

Some children with SEND or additional needs may require an individual risk assessment/support plan/behaviour plan/positive handling plan. This will be communicated with parents/carers and reviewed and updated accordingly. We will attempt to reduce risk by managing:

- the environment, including reducing stimuli or triggers that may be causing stress
- body language
- communication

The plan may also include:

- highlighting reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict or to diffuse a situation and holds to be used if necessary
- briefing staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training or guidance)
- circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil
- ensuring that additional support can be summoned if appropriate
- how support can be summoned if needed; any medical factors to be considered
- involving the parents/carers to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might need to take, and these will be reviewed after significant incidents

Where there is an identified risk, such as an increased likelihood in the need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions, we will have a specific risk assessment/plan in place and where possible, to mitigate risks such as through staff training and prevention strategies.

Reporting and recording

Statutory guidance states that governing bodies of maintained schools and the proprietors of other schools must ensure that a procedure is in place for recording each significant incident in which a

member of staff uses force on a pupil, as part of the school's duty under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

We will contact parents/carers to share incidents as appropriate and for every significant incident (statutory)*. The DfE states that a significant incident is any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff as described in 'Other physical contact with pupil'. This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention. Parents/carers should be contacted as soon as possible following a significant incident, and the incident explained to them. This action will also be recorded.

In deciding what a serious incident is, school leaders will use their professional judgment and consider the following:

• pupil's behaviour and level of risk presented at the time of the incident
• degree of force used
• effect on the pupil or member of staff
• the child's age

Staff will record (Appendix 2 or electronic recording system as appropriate) all incidents of reasonable force in accordance with school policy and report these to the Head teacher.

Details must include:

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

A report of the incident made to parents should 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 in that instance
- brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force
- details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable

School will communicate this in writing (statutory) via email. This includes any child who required seclusion or restraint as part of a behaviour support plan or risk assessment.

Where suitable, we will invite parents/carers into school to discuss significant incidents, to look at any potential warning signs/triggers or actions that may be done differently in the future

*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 within whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident.

Seclusion

We may use seclusion as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation and is not acting with intent. Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and preventing them from leaving. **Seclusion will not be implemented by staff through the threat of punishment.**

The place to which the pupil is confined will be safe and not feel threatening or intimidating to the pupil. The pupil will be supervised at all times during the period of seclusion. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil should be allowed to leave.

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

Pupil and staff support

As a school we will evaluate all incidents involving restrictive intervention as soon as practicable after an event to understand why it was used, the impact on pupils and staff. We will also look for any patterns or trends and identify how the use of restrictive interventions may be avoided in the future.

If appropriate, the pupils and staff members involved should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. Injuries will be recorded in line with our Health and Safety policy.

The school will also hold a follow-up conversation(s) to facilitate reflection, learning and to support pupil and staff wellbeing. This conversation will be part of the debriefing process and look to understand what happened during the incident and why.
As a school, we will continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed.

COMPLAINTS

Please refer to the school complaints policy

Appendix A: Reporting and Recording Pro-forma (in school)

Statutory guidance states that governing bodies of maintained schools and the proprietors of other schools must ensure that a procedure is in place for recording each significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil, as part of the school's duty under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006

Ropery Walk Primary School – Record of a significant incident using reasonable force

Date of incident: Time of incident:

Pupil Name: **D.O.B:**

Member(s) of staff involved:

Adult witnesses to restraint:

Pupil witnesses to restraint:

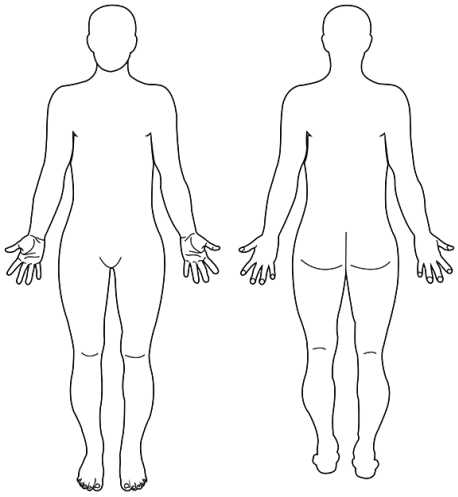
SEN Status EHCP SEN Support No SEN

Detail of need or disability

Actions leading up to the incident, identified or potential triggers if known, any preventative or de-escalation strategies attempted first, and why intervention was deemed necessary

Detailed description of the specific type of restraint or physical technique, including the degree of force used

Detail injuries sustained by pupils or staff (staff names should not be used on children's records), and property damage:



Actions taken after (first aid, comfort measures), and whether a support plan was followed:

Date parent/carer informed of incident: **Time:**

How were parents informed?:

Outline of parent/carer response:

Signature of staff completing report: **Date:**

Signature of Teacher-in-charge: **Date:**

Signature of Head/SLT member **Date:**

Brief description of any subsequent inquiry/complaint or action:

Reporting to parents template (Please note, the information statutorily required to report to parents in writing is different to the information needed to be recorded in school) **Pupil name**	
Date **Time** **Location** **Approximate duration of intervention**	
Why the intervention was necessary	
Brief description of the type of force used	
Details of any injuries sustained and first aid administered	

Appendix B

Terminology

For clarity, this policy will use the following definitions:

Restrictive intervention: a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This guidance uses 'restrictive interventions' as the umbrella term to describe 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, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

Significant incident: any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff as described in 'Other physical contact with pupils' within this document. 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 term used in legislation referring to a non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact. For example, holding a pupil's arms to their sides or removing a pupil's crutches would both be considered forms of restraint.

Appendix C: Positive handling plan example

POSITIVE HANDLING PLAN		
Name of pupil: **Date of plan:**		**Year:**
Staff involved in plan:		
Triggers (common situations/behaviour known to result in the need for positive handling)		
Behaviour (description of observable behaviours)		
Step One (Positive handling strategies (preferred strategies/de-escalation to keep the situation calm): Verbal advice / support ☐ Repeat instructions ☐ Time out offered ☐ Time out directed ☐ Tactical ignoring ☐ Controlled choices ☐ Distraction ☐ Reassurance ☐ Remind of: Rules, rights, responsibilities ☐ Remind of consequences ☐ Remind of successes ☐ Other:		
Step Two: Physical intervention strategies (Preferred strategies)		
Step Three: De-escalation strategies (Preferred strategies to be used to de-escalate the situation) Safe people? Safe places? Safe objects?		
Step Four: Encouragement (Appropriate encouragement and incentive can be offered to improve the situation)		
Step Five: Consequences (appropriate and agreed consequences to be issued after de-escalation once the pupil is regulated)		
Review date: (half-termly or post incident if applicable)		
Plan shared with: (including pupil and parents/carers) Signature Date		

Name	**Role**	**Date**