



Northern Arch

LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Schools – Use of Reasonable Force and other Restrictive Interventions in schools Policy & Guidance

Approving Body: Standards Committee

Review Cycle: 1 year

Last reviewed: Summer 2026

Date for next review: Summer 2027

School Policies on Related Issues

(To be read and followed alongside this document)

- Individual schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Individual schools Behaviour policy

The following policy has been written taking into account the recommendations from the documents below:

Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools, Guidance for schools in England 2026

[DfE advice template](#)

[Use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions guidance](#)

Department for Education and Behaviour in Schools Advice for headteachers and school staff February 2024

[Behaviour in Schools - Advice for headteachers and school staff Feb 2024](#)

1.1 It is the aim of this policy to:

- ensure that any use of reasonable force within the school reflects guidance from the DfE and professional Codes of Practice
- develop and sustain an ethos/culture and practice in school which protects the dignity and safety of both pupils and staff
- create and maintain a safe and secure learning environment
- proactively minimise the need to use reasonable force via de-escalation and early help strategies, however, promote a shared understanding that although always the last resort, restrictive intervention is an option that staff, authorised by the Headteacher/Principal, may have to take
- achieve outcomes that reflect the best interests of pupils whose behaviour is of immediate concern and others affected by the behaviour requiring intervention

- 1.2 Positive personal and professional relationships between staff and pupils are vital to ensure a positive culture and behaviours within our settings. It is recognised that the majority of pupils within our settings respond positively to the discipline and control practised by staff. This ensures the well-being and safety of all pupils and staff in our settings. The Trust recognises that reasonable force may at times be necessary, only after all proactive and preventative approaches have been exhausted. It is also acknowledged, however, that in exceptional circumstances, staff may need to act in situations where the use of reasonable force may be required and necessary. This policy recognises that pupils and staff have a right to work in a safe environment which promotes respectful behaviour.
- 1.3 The vast majority of pupils in the Trust settings behave well and conduct themselves in such a manner as to bring credit to themselves, their parents or carers and their setting. However, a small number of pupils may not meet the standards of behaviour and conduct the setting expects of them for a wide variety of reasons.
- 1.4 The individual setting's behaviour policies recognise the achievements and positive behaviour of pupils and ensures that these are recognised, shared and celebrated. It also recognises that consequences and sanctions may need to be applied.
- 1.5 However, there may be circumstances where preventative strategies have failed and some form of reasonable force may be unavoidable.

2. What is reasonable force, restrictive intervention and restraint?

Physical contact by a member of staff on a pupil to control or restrain their actions/movements. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances. Any use of reasonable force is an example of a restrictive intervention and may or may not involve the use of restraint.

School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury but, in extreme cases, it is recognised that it may not be possible to avoid injuring a pupil.

Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.

Restrictive interventions - Any planned or reactive action which limits a pupil's movement, liberty or freedom to act independently. Restrictive interventions may or may not involve the use of reasonable force.

Restraint - A form of restrictive intervention involving direct physical contact and force where the intention is to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. Restraint may or may not involve the use of force.

As noted within the definitions, these terms are not necessarily mutually exclusive categories. For example, depending on the circumstances, if two members of staff briefly physically pull apart two pupils who are fighting, all three definitions could be relevant.

3. Who can use reasonable force?

- All members of Trust staff have a legal power to use reasonable force
- This power applies to any member of staff in our settings, as they have a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all pupils and staff
- At NALP settings this does not apply to volunteers or parents

4. When can reasonable force be used?

Factors staff might want to consider include:

- **is it necessary?**
- **is it proportionate?**
- **pupil's welfare**

The decision on whether it is reasonable to use force and/or other restrictive interventions, as defined above, depends on the individual circumstances of each situation. In assessing whether force and/or other restrictive interventions are reasonable in a situation, the member of staff should use their professional judgement.

- Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder/disrupting the learning environment
- In our settings, reasonable force and restrictive intervention is used for two main purposes – to control pupils or to restrain them.
- 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.
- Every possible step should have been taken to prevent the situation, and to try to avoid the use of any reasonable force or restraint. Any force required should be reasonable and kept to a minimum
- The age, understanding and gender of the pupil are taken into account whenever possible to do so.
- Some children with SEND or additional needs may require an individual risk assessment/support plan/behaviour plan. This will be communicated with adults at home and reviewed and updated accordingly. Behaviour support plans/ risk assessments should outline any adjustments, such as to address aspects of the school environment which the pupil finds challenging and ways for pupils to communicate their needs effectively. Behaviour support plans/ risk assessments should detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil.

4.1 The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can and cannot be used.

5. Schools can use reasonable force to:

- remove disruptive pupils from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so
- prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit
- prevent a pupil leaving the classroom, where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour or learning of others
- prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff, visitor or another pupil, or to stop a fight
- preventing a pupil from causing damage to property
- if a pupil is attempting to abscond or leave school site, putting themselves at risk of harm
- restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical crisis

6. Schools cannot:

- use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

7. School staff may use restrictive physical intervention in the following ways:

- physically positioning themselves between pupils - **physical presence**
- blocking a pupil's path - **restriction of access or exit**
- escorting a pupil or guiding a pupil away - **physical diversion**

8. Power to search pupils without consent

8.1 In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described above, the Headteachers/Principals, and staff authorised by them can use such force as is reasonable (given the circumstances) to conduct a search for the following **“prohibited items”** under Section 550ZB of the Education Act 1996:

- knives and weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- stolen items
- tobacco, cigarette papers and vapes
- fireworks
- pornographic images
- any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property.

8.1 See ‘Searching, Screening and Confiscation Advice for schools July 2022’:
[Searching, screening and confiscation in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644442/Searching_Screening_and_Confiscation_Advice_for_schools_July_2022.pdf)

9 De-briefing – pupil and staff support

9.1 After the use of any reasonable force or restrictive intervention, the pupil and staff member should be offered a debrief and the chance to talk about what happened and why and how that situation can be avoided in the future, as well as repairing and rebuilding relationships through dialogue. This process should ideally be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident and may also benefit from the presence of an additional person to ensure impartiality and support.

10. Recording

10.1 Where reasonable force has been used, a record of the incident **must** be kept. This record should be made in the setting's incident book and/or a CPOMS entry and (depending on each setting's own preferred recording methods) the Appendix A form completed. An appropriate record should include:

- the name of the 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
- the length of time the intervention was used
- 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; what type of reasonable force was applied; the degree of force; and details of physical injuries sustained (if applicable)
- a brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance
- a record of any debrief(s) offered or accepted and any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

10.2 The incident book (usually kept in the pastoral office) report, CPOMS entry and/or Appendix A form (depending on each setting's preferred recording method) must be completed as soon as possible after the incident by the staff involved, normally prior to staff going off duty. Tjos will be signed by all staff involved, and the Headteacher/Principal.

11. Informing parents/carers when force has been used on a pupil

11.1 The setting's staff will report each significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil to each person with parental responsibility for the pupil as soon as practicable after the incident, except where:

- the pupil is aged 20 or over; or
- it appears to the staff member that doing so would be likely to result in significant harm to the pupil. This includes all forms of abuse and neglect. In this instance, the staff member must report the incident to the local authority within whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident.

A report of the incident made to parents should include the following details:

- time, date, location and approximate length of time the intervention was used
- brief account of what type of reasonable force was applied, and the degree of force
- details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance

School will communicate this in writing, either via email or through each setting's preferred parent communication platform, as soon as practicable.

12. Other physical contact with pupils

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 some occasions when physical contact is generally appropriate include:

- holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school or on a school trip, or when helping a pupil to a space they have chosen to access to self-regulate
- when comforting a distressed pupil
- when a pupil is being congratulated or praised
- to demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- to demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching
- to give first aid

The above list is not exhaustive.

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 always supervised during the period of seclusion. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil will 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’**.

13. Monitoring

Headteachers/Principals

13.1 Headteachers/Principals should monitor any use of reasonable force/restrictive intervention by examining:

- the frequency of their use
- the justification for their use
- their nature
- their users
- the views of students concerning them

13.2 Headteachers/Principals must ensure that:

- the need to use reasonable force is minimised
- physical restraint is used only in the appropriate circumstances
- only the appropriate degree of reasonable force is used
- a debrief is always carried out with pupils and staff

13.3 Headteachers/Principals must also:

- report on the use of reasonable force to the setting’s Governing Body
- take appropriate action over issues of concern of either a general or specific nature
- ensure record keeping is accurate.

Governors

13.4 Governors should monitor the use of reasonable force within the school ensuring that:

- the incidence of the use of reasonable force is reported to them termly
- incidents comply with the Trust’s policy
- trends are recognised
- action is taken to reduce the use of reasonable force.

Appendix A - Record of Significant Incident Using Reasonable Force

Date of Incident:

Time of Incident:

Location:

Pupil name:

Member of staff involved in incident:

Approximate length of time restrictive intervention was required

Type of Intervention which was required:

1 person guide

1 person hold

2 person guide

2 person hold

2 person seated hold

Strategies utilised to avoid the use of reasonable force or restrictive intervention (highlight as necessary):

Change of face

Removal of audience

Verbal advice/support

Calm Talking

Clear expectations

Change of environment

Distraction

Reassurance

Success reminders

Why was Reasonable force or Restrictive Intervention necessary:

Risk to self

Risk to others

Damage to property

Prevention of absconding site

Description of the event/behaviour leading up to the use of reasonable force/restrictive intervention:

**Has medical attention been offered to the student/staff involved in the incident
(please tick)**

Yes

☐

Offered but declined

☐

Has the medical treatment administered been logged

☐

**Has a phone call home been made to parent/carers to inform them that reasonable
force/restrictive intervention was required?**

☐

Has an email been sent out to parent/carers containing the following information;

Time/Date/Location of the incident

Brief account of why reasonable intervention was necessary

What type of reasonable force was applied

Details of any injuries sustained

☐

Full Name:

Signature:

Date: