

Use of restrictive interventions policy (including reasonable force and seclusion)

Review date: April 2026

Date of next review: April 2029

Review History				
Date to be reviewed	Reviewer	Approved by	Date approved	Implemented
March 2026	School Standards Lead/Head of Governance, Policy & Compliance	Directors	March 2026	April 2026
April 2028				
Recent Revisions				
Issue No.	Date	Revisions made		
1	April 2026	New policy in line with the DFE Guidance 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force in schools' England 2026		

1. Aims and Scope

Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust and all its schools strive to create a safe, secure and supportive environment for all pupils and staff.

There are times when the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, is lawful and necessary to keep people safe. However, we understand that the use of restrictive interventions can have a significant impact on pupils, staff and parents/carers. In our school, they are only ever considered as a last resort, once all other prevention and de-escalation strategies have been exhausted.

This policy aims to:

- Minimise the need to use restrictive interventions, through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies.
- Help school staff feel confident in knowing how to use restrictive interventions safely, appropriately and lawfully, when they are necessary.
- Clearly set out the steps for recording and reporting incidents of reasonable force, seclusion and restraint.
- Protect the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all pupils and staff, and help create a positive and safe place for everyone at school.

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](#)
- Paragraph 16A of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (inserted by [The Schools \(Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint\) \(No. 2\) \(England\) Regulations 2025](#))

This policy also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

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

4. 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

Restrictive interventions: are used to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body or part of the body. This policy uses 'restrictive interventions' as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways.

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.

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 until they calm down is a form of 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.

5. Roles and responsibilities

The Trust

The Trust is responsible for:

- 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 Trust schools.
- 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

- 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.

6. The Trust's approach to the use of force

The Trust's approach to the use of force is in line with the DFE guidance:

- The school does not require parental consent to use force on a pupil.
- The school does not have a 'no contact' policy.
- There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to have physical contact with pupils which do not give rise to any question about the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions. This depends on the circumstance, but examples of occasions when physical contact is 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.

7. Acceptable uses of force

All 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 or otherwise.

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.

The Trust will ensure staff are adequately trained and that risk assessments are carried out where necessary.

Any significant incident involving the use of force will be recorded and reported in accordance with the procedures.

8. Unacceptable uses of force

It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment. Staff will never use force as a sanction, threat or deterrent.

Staff understand that any form of force or restraint carries a risk of physical and psychological harm and will always avoid using these measures where possible.

The following uses of force are **never acceptable**:

- Using force for the purpose of punishment.
- 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.
- 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.

9. 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.

Reasonable force can be used 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. Reasonable force cannot be used 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. Further information on how searches will be conducted is included in the school's behaviour policy.

10. Prevention and de-escalation strategies

Restrictive intervention is used only when necessary. Schools will aim to minimise its use as much as possible, using both whole-school and individual approaches.

The whole-school approach includes:

- 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 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.

The individual approaches include:

- Working closely with parents/carers to support individual pupils
- Strategies to support individual pupils based on their identified needs, including:
 - The development of behaviour support plans.
 - Strategies to help pupils calm down before their behaviour escalates.
 - Making 'reasonable adjustments' where a pupil has a disability, to help them participate in school life as fully as possible.

De-escalation when a situation arises

When a staff member is faced with a situation where a restrictive intervention may need to be used, they should consider using de-escalation techniques first,

wherever possible. Techniques that could be used in these situations include:

- Having open body language and being aware of a pupil's personal space.
- Taking a pupil away from an 'audience' – speaking to them on their own rather than in front of a group of other pupils or staff.
- Using empathy – asking the pupil to help you understand their feelings.
- Distraction techniques.
- Offering a calm space for the pupil to go to so they can self-regulate.
- Verbal warnings – calmly reminding the pupil of the consequences of their behaviour.

11. Deciding when the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate

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 de-escalation techniques 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.

Pupil welfare

The most important consideration when using a restrictive intervention is the safety and wellbeing of the pupil involved, as well as the safety of other pupils and staff. Staff should always consider the potential impact on the pupil's welfare balanced against any actions taken. For example, staff should bear in mind that pupils who have experienced adverse life events, trauma or neglect, or who have diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, communication difficulties or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.

If a restrictive intervention is needed, staff should always aim to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity. This includes consideration of the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.

Staff should, wherever possible, clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and what the pupil needs to do, including using verbal and non-verbal strategies where needed, and giving time for the pupil to process information and respond where appropriate.

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.

Support following an incident

As soon as possible after any use of restrictive intervention, the school will evaluate the incident to understand why restrictive intervention was used, the impact on pupils and staff, any patterns and trends, and how another incident could be avoided in the future.

The school will make sure each pupil and staff member involved get the right support, including a medical assessment and treatment if needed, and an opportunity to reflect on and talk through the incident.

This follow-up conversation(s) will be part of the overall debriefing process to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from all parties involved. Conversations should also aim to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue.

Wherever possible, this process will be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident. It may also include the presence of an additional person to ensure impartiality and support. The school will continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed.

Depending on the circumstances, support may also be offered to those who witnessed the incident.

12. Considerations of pupils with SEND

The Trust and its schools 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.

All schools within the Trust are committed to understanding what might trigger challenging behaviour in pupils with SEND, and to providing the right support and an inclusive environment.

The school 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. The Trust and its schools are aware of the 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.

The school 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. The school will also work with pupils, 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, the school will create individual behaviour support 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 is 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.

13. Training and risk assessments

The 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.

The Trust also has a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all staff. Therefore, risk assessments will be carried out 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.

14. Recording and reporting arrangements

Schools have a legal duty to record and report all:

- Significant incidents involving force
- Seclusion incidents
- Restraint incidents

Recording incidents

Staff must record incidents in writing using the reporting and recording proforma 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. The incident should also be logged on the pupil's record, and a copy of the completed proforma attached to the pupil's record.

For significant incidents involving force, staff 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.
 - 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.
- Statements from witnesses.
- Confirmation of when and how parents/carers were notified.
- Any follow-up actions that were taken.

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.

- Statements from witnesses.
- Confirmation of when and how parents/carers were notified.
- Any follow-up actions that were taken.

Note: if a seclusion or restraint incident also constitutes a significant incident involving force, the school will record it in line with the 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 Trust data protection procedures.

Reporting incidents to parents/carers

When reporting an incident to parents/carers, the Headteacher/DSL will contact the parent/carer by telephone to tell them about an incident as soon as possible after it happens, the school 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. All incidents will be reported to parent/carer, in writing, using the reporting to parent/carer template.

The exception to this is if a member of staff thinks that telling the pupil's parent/carer would likely result in significant harm to that pupil. In these cases, the incident would be reported to any parent/carer to whom it can be reported to without resulting in significant harm or, if there are none, to the local authority where the pupil ordinarily resides.

The school will report significant incidents involving force to parents/carers in writing, and 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.

Seclusion incidents and restraint incidents will be reported to parents/carers in writing, we will provide parents/carers with:

- 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.

If a seclusion or restraint incident also constitutes a significant incident involving force, we will report it in line with the procedure for reporting significant incidents involving force. It does not need to be reported twice.

Following 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 behaviour support plans were followed.
- What de-escalation strategies were used and how effective they were.
- What might be done differently in the future.

Reporting incidents to the local authority

In cases where the school have assessed that an incident needs to be reported to the local authority where the pupil ordinarily resides, this report will include all the information that we would normally share with the pupil's parents/carers, as well as the reasons why it was deemed unsafe to tell the pupil's parents/carers directly.

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, the school will report the incident to the relevant local authority in addition to the parents.

15. Complaints and allegations

Any complaints about the use of restrictive interventions will be handled through the Trust policy, which can be found [here](#)

The Trust and its schools take any allegation of inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions made against a member of staff very seriously. All allegations will be dealt with in line with the statutory safeguarding guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).