POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY

A Safeguarding Policy to be read in conjunction with the Behaviour Policy and SEN Policy

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Contents

1. Introduction 3
2. Aims 3
3. Scope 3
4. Defining Reasonable Force and Restrictive Interventions 4
    4.1 Restrictive interventions 4
    4.2 Seclusion, removal and reflection 4
    4.3 Specialist training 4
    4.4 De-escalation 4
    4.5 De-escalation recording requirement 5
    4.6 When is it safe to use reasonable force? 5
5. How to Apply Safety Intervention 5
    5.1 Who can perform a safety intervention? 5
    5.2 Medical exemptions 5
    5.3 Staff must not 5
6. Significant Incidents: Recording and Reporting 6
7. Risk of Injury 6
8. Post-Incident Structure and Support 6
    8.1 Parent/carer communication 6
9. Safeguarding Recording, Monitoring and Data Analysis 6
10. SEND, Equality and Individual Needs 7
11. Complaints Procedure 7
Appendix 1. Parent/Carer Statement 8

1. Introduction

This policy complements and reinforces the principles and practice of the Academy Behaviour Policy and forms part of Evolve Academy's wider safeguarding framework.

It has been updated in response to the Department for Education's revised work on restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, and the legal duties that came into force on 1 April 2026 requiring schools to record and report significant incidents of force and incidents of seclusion.

This policy should be read alongside:

- Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Department for Education guidance on restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (latest version)
- The Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Evolve Academy Behaviour Policy and SEN Policy

Evolve Academy strives to create an environment in which children, young people and adults feel happy, safe, secure and valued. We aim to ensure an approach to behaviour that is known and understood by pupils, staff, parents/carers and outside agencies.

The use of reasonable force or any other restrictive intervention is a serious matter. Evolve Academy is committed to minimising their use through prevention, positive relationships, early intervention, de-escalation, individual planning and review.

Where reasonable force is used, it must be lawful, necessary, proportionate and no more force than is reasonably required in the circumstances. Force must never be used as a punishment.

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 enables school staff to use reasonable force in specified circumstances, including to prevent a pupil from:

- committing a criminal offence;
- causing personal injury to themselves or another person;
- causing damage to property; or
- prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school.

2. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- provide clear guidance on the lawful and appropriate use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions;
- ensure staff understand that prevention and de-escalation are the primary approach and that physical intervention is a last resort;
- ensure staff are confident about their responsibilities and the limits of their authority;
- support consistent practice through CPI Safety Intervention training and ongoing professional development;
- meet the legal duties introduced from 1 April 2026 for recording and reporting significant incidents of force and incidents of seclusion;
- ensure pupils receive appropriate post-incident support and that their views are sought;

- ensure parents/carers are informed as soon as practicable and, wherever possible, on the same day;
- support transparent monitoring, quality assurance and analysis of restrictive intervention data;
- acknowledge the duty to make reasonable adjustments and give proper consideration to pupils with SEND, disabilities, medical needs and communication needs; and
- reduce the likelihood of complaints and concerns through clear expectations, accurate records and reflective practice.

3. Scope

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in the limited circumstances permitted by law. The decision to intervene physically must be based on professional judgement and the individual circumstances.

- Staff do not require parental consent to use reasonable force lawfully.
- Lawful use of reasonable force can provide a defence to related criminal prosecution or other legal action.
- An allegation that a member of staff used excessive force must be considered fairly and in accordance with safeguarding, disciplinary and complaints procedures; suspension is not an automatic response.
- The Advisory Board and school leaders will consider whether the member of staff acted within the law, this policy and their training when reviewing an incident.

4. Defining Reasonable Force and Restrictive Interventions

The term ‘reasonable force’ covers a broad range of actions involving a degree of physical contact with pupils. The decision on whether to physically intervene depends on the individual circumstances and the professional judgement of the member of staff.

Force may be used to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety through to more restrictive physical intervention in circumstances where it is necessary to prevent harm or otherwise act within the legal power.

- ‘Reasonable in the circumstances’ means using no more force than is needed.
- Control may include passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a route, or active physical contact, such as guiding a pupil away from immediate danger.
- Restraint means holding back physically or bringing a pupil under control, usually in more serious circumstances.
- Staff should seek to avoid injury. However, in extreme circumstances it may not always be possible to prevent all risk of injury.

4.1 Restrictive interventions

Restrictive interventions are measures that restrict a pupil’s movement, liberty or freedom to act. They may include the use of force and may also include non-force interventions such as seclusion.

Restrictive interventions must only be used where they are necessary, proportionate and justified by the circumstances. They must never be used to punish a pupil. The school will continually seek to reduce their use through preventative support, de-escalation, review of triggers and analysis of patterns.

4.2 Seclusion, removal and reflection

Seclusion is a type of restrictive intervention. It is defined as the supervised confinement and isolation of a pupil, away from other pupils, in an area from which the pupil is prevented from leaving of their own free will.

Seclusion must never be used as punishment. Any incident of seclusion must be recorded and reported to the pupil's parent/carer in accordance with the statutory duties in force from 1 April 2026.

Seclusion is distinct from removal. Removal is a behaviour measure in which a pupil is required to spend a limited period out of the classroom, in a setting where they can continue their education.

At Evolve Academy, reflection/removal is not seclusion where the pupil is not physically prevented from leaving. If a pupil is prevented from leaving of their own free will, the intervention is seclusion and must be treated, recorded and reported as such.

4.3 Specialist training

Evolve Academy recognises the benefits of specialist behaviour management training for staff in prevention, de-escalation and the safe and lawful use of reasonable force.

The Academy's chosen model is CPI Safety Intervention (Crisis Prevention Institute).

- Contracted staff are expected to complete the relevant CPI participant training.
- Training includes prevention, de-escalation, risk assessment and physical intervention techniques.
- Refresher training is provided annually and through additional CPD where the CPI instructor or school leaders identify a need.
- Incoming contracted and supply staff receive safeguarding and behaviour information, including this policy and the Behaviour Policy.
- Where a member of staff has not received CPI training, this does not remove the legal power to use reasonable force in the circumstances permitted by law. However, staff should seek trained support wherever practicable and must not attempt an intervention where they cannot reasonably expect it to reduce the risk of harm.

School leaders will keep training arrangements under review and ensure that the selected training reflects the principles of current DfE guidance.

4.4 De-escalation

De-escalation is the primary form of intervention at all times. The use of force or another restrictive intervention should be a last resort where practicable.

Primary strategies to reduce escalation include:

- appropriate language, positive tone of voice and non-threatening body stance;
- a change of face, involving the most appropriate available adult;
- ensuring the pupil feels listened to and their point of view is understood;
- offering realistic options that support the pupil to regain control while preserving dignity;
- adapting the environment by removing unnecessary people, obstacles or triggers;
- negotiation and reassurance;
- respecting the pupil's dignity, communication needs and individual profile;
- ensuring the adult response is fair and consistent with the Behaviour Policy; and
- reflecting on any adult or environmental factors that may have contributed to escalation.

4.5 De-escalation recording requirement

Where a significant incident of force occurs, the record must make clear what happened before the intervention and why force became necessary. Staff should record:

- the antecedent/context and presenting risk;
- the preventative or de-escalation strategies attempted, where practicable;
- the pupil's response;
- why the situation continued or escalated; and
- why the use of force was considered necessary and proportionate.

4.6 When is it safe to use reasonable force?

CPI training requires staff to carry out a dynamic risk assessment before and throughout a physical intervention, taking account of the urgency of the situation.

Staff must consider whether:

- there is a lawful reason to intervene;
- the intervention is necessary to address the risk;
- the intervention is proportionate to the seriousness and likelihood of harm;
- the intervention is likely to reduce, rather than increase, the overall risk;
- less restrictive alternatives have been considered or attempted where practicable;
- the pupil's SEND, disability, medical needs, communication needs and known risks have been considered; and
- the intervention can stop as soon as the need for it ceases.

Trained staff should also refer to the relevant CPI materials on dynamic risk assessment and physical interventions.

5. How to Apply Safety Intervention

Children's rights, dignity and welfare must be respected. Effective communication should be used throughout any intervention wherever possible.

Where circumstances allow, the pupil should be told calmly what staff need them to do, why intervention may be necessary and that the intervention will stop as soon as it is safe to do so.

Staff must not give the impression that they are acting in anger, frustration or punishment. Trained staff are expected to use CPI-taught physical intervention strategies within the scope of their training.

5.1 Who can perform a safety intervention?

All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in the limited circumstances permitted by law. Specialist training is not a precondition to the existence of that legal power.

Staff should take reasonable and proportionate action to protect pupils and others while recognising that they are not expected to place themselves at unreasonable risk. Where practicable, trained staff should lead or support physical interventions.

5.2 Medical exemptions

If a member of staff is unable to participate in physical safety interventions because of illness, injury, pregnancy, disability or another relevant reason, this should be reported to the Head Teacher without delay so that appropriate arrangements and reasonable adjustments can be considered.

5.3 Staff must not

- use force as a punishment;
- use more force than is reasonable and necessary;
- continue an intervention after the need for it has ceased;
- act in anger or retaliation;
- use unsafe, degrading or inappropriate contact; or
- use restraint where it is not reasonably expected to reduce the likelihood of harm.

6. Significant Incidents: Recording and Reporting

From 1 April 2026, schools are legally required to record each significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil and to report that incident to the parents/carers of the pupil involved. The legislation also requires the recording and reporting of incidents of seclusion.

For the purposes of this policy, a significant incident of force is an incident where the use of reasonable force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff.

Examples of appropriate physical contact that would not ordinarily constitute a significant incident may include routine, appropriate contact such as comforting a distressed pupil, congratulatory contact, or appropriate physical support as part of teaching or care. Professional judgement must always be applied to the individual circumstances.

At Evolve Academy, any physical restraint and any incident of seclusion will be recorded and reported. Where there is uncertainty about whether an incident meets the threshold, staff should record it and seek advice from SLT/CPI Lead.

Recording and reporting must take place as soon as practicable. The school will endeavour to complete the record and inform parents/carers no later than the same day.

7. Risk of Injury

Any restrictive safety intervention may carry a risk of injury to a pupil or member of staff. An injury does not, by itself, establish that an intervention was inappropriate or incorrectly performed.

Staff may sometimes have to make an immediate professional judgement between intervening and allowing a foreseeable risk to continue. These decisions should be informed by the legal test of reasonableness, dynamic risk assessment, training, the pupil's individual needs and the likelihood that intervention will reduce overall risk.

Where an injury occurs, medical needs must be addressed promptly and the injury must be recorded and reviewed in accordance with the Academy's procedures.

8. Post-Incident Structure and Support

A key aim of post-crisis support is to re-establish a sense of calm and safety, restore relationships, strengthen trust and address the immediate needs of the pupil, staff members and others affected.

After an appropriate period for those involved to regulate and reflect, the following should take place:

1. Any injury to a pupil or member of staff is assessed and recorded in accordance with Academy procedures, including the Accident Book where required.
2. The significant incident/restrictive intervention is recorded on Sleuth.
3. A debrief and appropriate support are offered to the pupil and to staff involved.
4. The pupil's views are sought and recorded, using an appropriate communication method.

5. Parents/carers are informed in accordance with section 8.1.
6. The pupil's risk assessment, positive handling plan, behaviour support plan or other relevant plan is reviewed and updated where appropriate.
7. The incident is reviewed to identify triggers, learning points, preventative strategies and any required changes to practice.

8.1 Parent/carer communication

Parents/carers must be informed of significant incidents of force and incidents of seclusion as soon as practicable. Evolve Academy will endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

The communication should, as appropriate, explain:

- that an incident occurred and the nature of the intervention used;
- the circumstances and risk that led to the intervention;
- any injury or immediate welfare concerns;
- the support provided after the incident; and
- any planned follow-up or review.

A record that the parent/carer was informed, including the date, time and method of communication, must be retained.

9. Safeguarding Recording, Monitoring and Data Analysis

All significant incidents of force and all incidents of seclusion must be recorded on Sleuth as soon as practicable and, wherever possible, on the same day.

Records should include, as applicable:

- date, time and location;
- staff and pupils involved and relevant witnesses;
- antecedent/context and the risk presented;
- preventative and de-escalation strategies used or considered;
- the type of force or restrictive intervention used;
- the duration and any changes during the intervention;
- the outcome, including injuries, first aid or medical support;
- the pupil's views and post-incident support;
- parent/carer notification; and
- follow-up actions, including review of risk assessments or support plans.

When an RPI is undertaken, the CPI Lead/instructor, Head Teacher and relevant SLT members must be informed in line with Academy procedures.

Restrictive intervention records are safeguarding records. Incidents will be quality assured and reviewed regularly by school leaders and the CPI Lead. Data will be analysed for patterns, triggers, frequency, duration, pupil groups, staff training needs and opportunities to reduce future interventions.

The Academy will make data on the use of restrictive interventions available to Ofsted during inspection as required by the revised national framework.

10. SEND, Equality and Individual Needs

Evolve Academy recognises that pupils with SEND and/or disabilities may be more likely to experience situations in which restrictive intervention is considered. Staff must proactively seek to understand and reduce triggers, communication barriers and environmental factors.

In planning and responding to incidents, staff must give particular consideration to:

- the duty to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010;
- the pupil's communication and sensory profile;
- known trauma, anxiety or other factors that may affect regulation;
- medical conditions and physical vulnerabilities;
- individual behaviour support plans, risk assessments, EHCPs or other plans where applicable;
- the views of the pupil and parent/carer; and
- co-production with relevant professionals where this will help reduce the need for restrictive interventions.

The use of reasonable force or other restrictive interventions must not discriminate unlawfully and must be consistent with the Academy's safeguarding and equality duties.

11. Complaints Procedure

Any complaint or concern regarding the use of physical restraint, reasonable force or another restrictive intervention should be directed to the Head Teacher, Safeguarding Lead and CPI Lead in the first instance for appropriate consideration.

Where a possible breach of policy, safeguarding concern or allegation about a member of staff is identified, the matter will be addressed through the appropriate safeguarding, disciplinary and/or complaints route.

Pupils and parents/carers will be supported to access the Academy's complaints procedure. The school will seek to resolve concerns promptly and fairly while ensuring that any statutory safeguarding or employment procedures take precedence where required.

Any complaint arising from the use of restraint or another restrictive intervention will be considered in light of:

- statutory safeguarding and child protection procedures;
- staff disciplinary or employment procedures where relevant; and
- the Academy's Complaints Policy.

Appendix 1. Parent/Carer Statement: Use of Reasonable Force and Restrictive Interventions

Within Evolve Academy and the Alternative Learning Trust, the safety, wellbeing and development of every pupil is a high priority. We are committed to creating a safe, supportive and inclusive environment where pupils can thrive and make progress academically, socially and behaviourally.

Our staff are trained to work with pupils who may, at times, display behaviour that is challenging or unsafe. We recognise that behaviour is a form of communication and aim to understand and support the underlying needs of pupils.

Our Approach to Behaviour Support

- We focus on positive relationships, early intervention and de-escalation strategies.
- Staff receive regular training to help them support pupils calmly, respectfully and effectively.
- Our aim is always to support pupils without the need for physical intervention wherever possible.

Use of Reasonable Force

There may be occasions when staff need to use reasonable force to keep a pupil or others safe or to respond to circumstances permitted by law. This may include guiding a pupil away from danger, preventing harm, stopping damage to property or managing an immediate risk.

Any use of reasonable force will be necessary, proportionate, used for no longer than required, and reviewed in line with school policy.

Restrictive Interventions and Seclusion

Restrictive interventions are used only where necessary and proportionate. Seclusion means the supervised confinement and isolation of a pupil, away from other pupils, in an area from which they are prevented from leaving of their own free will. Seclusion must never be used as punishment.

Significant incidents involving force and all incidents of seclusion are recorded and reported to parents/carers as soon as practicable, with the school endeavouring to do so on the same day.

Working in Partnership

We believe that the best outcomes for pupils are achieved when schools and families work together. By signing this statement, you are confirming that you:

- have read and understood our approach to behaviour support;
- understand that staff may use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions when necessary and lawful to maintain safety;
- understand that significant incidents of force and incidents of seclusion will be recorded and reported to parents/carers; and
- support the school and Trust in carrying out their duty of care to pupils and staff.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss our approach further, please contact the Academy.

Parent / Carer Agreement

I confirm that I have read and understood the statement regarding the use of reasonable force and restrictive interventions and understand the Academy's approach to maintaining a safe and supportive environment.

Pupil Name: _____

School: _____

Parent / Carer Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____