



Harlowbury "Believe, Succeed, Inspire"

Primary School

POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR THE USE OF REASONABLE FORCE/ RESTRICTIVE PHYSICAL INTERVENTION AND PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH PUPILS

POLICY FIRST ADOPTED & RATIFIED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNING BODY	May 2017
POLICY LAST REVIEWED & REVISED	November 2020 Revised Reviewed Sept 2025
POLICY TO BE NEXT REVIEWED OR EARLIER IF REQUIRED	October 2025

Signature:

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Date September 2025

Chair of Harlowbury Local Governing Body
Part of NET Academy Trust Harlow



Use of Reasonable Force / Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) Policy

Please note: Due to the merger, some policies remain in draft format and will be finalised as soon as possible.

Policy Statement

Harlowbury Primary School Local Governing Body recognises and accepts its responsibility to provide a safe and secure environment for pupils, families, employees, and visitors. To support this aim, the school has adopted a number of related policies and procedures. This policy should be read alongside:

- The Department for Education's *Behaviour in Schools: advice for headteachers and school staff* (updated February 2024)
- The forthcoming revised guidance on *Use of Reasonable Force and other Restrictive Interventions*, including the requirement (from September 2025) to record and report every significant incident to parents and carers
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025* (statutory safeguarding guidance)
- The Harlowbury Behaviour Policy
- The Harlowbury First Aid Policy
- Trauma-Informed Practice approaches
- The Harlowbury Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- The Harlowbury Safer Recruitment Policy
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006

1. What is Reasonable Force / Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI)?

- The term covers a broad range of actions that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.
- RPI may be used either to **control** or **restrain**. This can range from guiding a pupil by the arm through to more extreme actions, such as breaking up a fight or restraining a pupil to prevent violence, injury, or serious damage to property.
- *Reasonable in the circumstances* means using no more force than is necessary.
- Staff should avoid actions likely to cause injury. In extreme cases, this may not always be possible.
- RPI will only be used where staff hold an *honest belief* that failure to act would result in violence, injury, or significant damage.

2. When Can Reasonable Force / RPI Be Used?

Under the **Education and Inspections Act 2006**, reasonable force may be used to prevent a pupil from:

- Committing an offence (or what would be an offence for an older pupil).
- Causing personal injury to themselves or others.
- Causing serious damage to property.
- Prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or during supervised activities.

Factors influencing judgement include:

- The seriousness of the incident if force is not used.
- The likelihood of resolving the situation by other means.
- The risks of intervention compared with alternative strategies.

Examples (drawn from DfE guidance and widely adopted practice) may include — though are not limited to:

- Removing a pupil from a classroom when remaining there risks harm or serious disruption

- Preventing a pupil behaving in a way that jeopardises safety or order at school events or visits
- Preventing a pupil from leaving a classroom where doing so risks their safety or disrupts others
- Stopping a physical fight or attack
- Restricting a pupil's movement to prevent self-harm (in situations where less restrictive measures have failed)

These examples are illustrative and will be reviewed in light of future DfE guidance on restrictive interventions.

3. Power to Search Pupils Without Consent

Staff may use reasonable force to conduct a search for prohibited items, including (but not limited to):

- Knives or weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Stolen items
- Tobacco and cigarette papers
- Fireworks
- Pornographic images
- Any article reasonably suspected of being used to commit an offence, cause injury, or damage property

Searches without consent may only be carried out by staff who are **authorised and appropriately trained**. Any search must be **justified, proportionate, and conducted with due regard for the pupil's privacy and dignity**.

The school will ensure that neither the search nor subsequent actions conflict with its **safeguarding obligations** under *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025* and associated DfE guidance.

The Headteacher (or designated senior staff member) will normally inform the parents or carers of the pupil when **alcohol, illegal drugs, or other harmful items** are found, unless there is a clear safeguarding reason not to.

The school's approach to handling complaints about searches or confiscations will follow the established Complaints Procedure.

4. Communicating the School Approach

- The Behaviour Policy and this RPI Policy will be shared with staff, parents/carers, and pupils and published on the website.
- The policy acknowledges the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and those with SEND. Where appropriate, personalised **5 Step Management Plans** will be agreed with parents.
- Parental consent is not required for the use of RPI.
- Harlowbury does not operate a *no contact* policy, as this could breach duty of care.
- Clear communication reduces the likelihood of complaints when RPI is applied properly.

5. Prohibited Techniques

In line with DfE guidance, the following restraint methods must never be used due to unacceptable risk:

- *Seated double embrace*
- *Double basket hold*
- *Nose distraction technique*

6. Risk Assessments

- Individual risk assessments will be developed for pupils where behaviours present potential risk.
- These will be signed by school and parents, regularly reviewed, and updated as required.
- Risk management may include guiding or escorting pupils to safer spaces.

7. Reflection & Sensory Spaces

Harlowbury provides breakout and sensory areas to:

- Offer safe environments for self-regulation.
- Reduce risk of harm to self or others.
- Provide calming environments with sensory resources.
- Pupils will always be supervised by staff.

Any *forced* use of these spaces is only permitted in **exceptional circumstances** (e.g. imminent risk of harm). Such incidents will be:

- Recorded in detail (antecedents, staff/pupil involved, duration, outcome, lessons learnt).
- Reported to parents.
- Reviewed and incorporated into personalised plans.

8. Staff Training

Staff receive ongoing training in positive behaviour management and the safe use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) using the **TPP (Train the Trainer) approach**.

Key staff members have also completed additional **Positive Handling training** with **Intelligensa**, including advanced de-escalation techniques.

The school is currently training all staff using the **TPP approach** to ensure consistent practice across the setting.

The core principles of the training include:

- Inclusion of all children
- Shared values across the community
- De-escalation and risk management
- Reflection and restoration

9. Reporting & Monitoring

- All incidents are recorded on **CPOMS** with details including pupil(s) involved, context, actions, response, and outcome.
- Injuries to staff are recorded digitally (QR code system).
- Injuries to pupils are recorded in the accident book, with copies sent to parents.
- Incidents are monitored and reported to the Local Governing Body.

Parents will be informed whenever RPI is used with their child. Pupils with additional communication needs will be supported using **visual aids, key words, Makaton, and communication widgets** to ensure they understand safeguarding and safety procedures and that their voice is heard.

10. Complaints and Allegations

Complaints are handled under **DfE guidance (2014)** and the school's Safeguarding Policy.

- All complaints will be investigated thoroughly and quickly.
- Where staff acted lawfully, this provides a defence in criminal or civil proceedings.
- Suspension is not automatic; decisions will be case-specific.
- Staff subject to allegations will be supported and provided with a named contact.
- The Governing Body will always consider whether staff acted within the law before deciding on disciplinary action.

11. Other Physical Contact

Reasonable, non-restrictive physical contact with pupils is sometimes appropriate, e.g.:

- Offering an arm or hand
- A supportive side-on shoulder hug
- Comforting a distressed pupil
- Handshakes / congratulation
- Demonstrating an instrument or PE technique
- Administering first aid