

# Harrow Lodge Primary School



## POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY

<b>REVIEWED:</b>	<b>Autumn 2025</b>
<b>EFFECTIVE PERIOD:</b>	<b>Spring 2026 – Spring 2028</b>
<b>DUE FOR REVIEW:</b>	<b>Autumn 2027</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S):</b>	<b>MRS S BOYES</b>

## 1. Aims and scope

At Harrow Lodge Primary School we strive to create a safe, secure and supportive environment for all our pupils and staff.

We recognise that there are times when the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, is lawful and necessary to keep people safe. However, we also understand that such interventions can have a significant emotional and physical impact on pupils, staff and parents/carers.

In our school, restrictive interventions are always used as a last resort, in line with the PRICE (Protecting Rights in a Caring Environment) approach. This means that all staff prioritise prevention, de-escalation, and the least restrictive response, ensuring that pupils' rights, dignity and wellbeing remain central to all actions.

The PRICE framework supports staff in making safe, ethical and consistent decisions when responding to behaviour that may present a risk.

This policy aims to:

- Minimise the need to use restrictive interventions through PRICE-informed early intervention, prevention and de-escalation strategies
- Support staff to feel confident in using PRICE-approved approaches safely, appropriately and lawfully when required
- Clearly set out procedures for recording and reporting incidents of reasonable force, seclusion and restraint
- Protect the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all pupils and staff, in line with PRICE principles of care, respect and proportionality

## 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)

## 3. Definitions

The terms used in this policy are based on DfE guidance and are applied through the PRICE approach, which ensures that all interventions are:

- Necessary
- Proportionate

- Ethical
- Risk-assessed

Restrictive interventions are used to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body or part of the body.

Examples include:

- Supervised seclusion where a pupil is prevented from leaving for safety
- Passive physical contact such as blocking a pupil's path

Reasonable force refers to actions involving the minimum force necessary, used for the shortest time, consistent with PRICE training.

Restraint is a form of restrictive intervention that limits movement and must only be carried out using PRICE-approved techniques by trained staff.

Seclusion is used only to manage significant risk, never as punishment, and must align with PRICE principles of care and dignity.

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 (linked to in section 2 of this policy).

**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

**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.

### 3.1 Appropriate physical contact with pupils

Our school does not operate a 'no contact' policy. 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 or other restrictive interventions.

Appropriate physical contact is guided by professional judgement and PRICE principles, ensuring that all contact is:

- Safe
- Respectful
- In the best interests of the pupil

Where physical intervention is required, staff must use PRICE-approved techniques for which they are trained.

Staff consider:

- Safeguarding guidance
- Individual pupil needs (including SEND)
- Whether a less restrictive PRICE strategy could be used

Examples include:

- Providing first aid to a pupil
- Guiding or escorting a pupil through the school building or on a school trip by holding their hand
- Comforting a pupil who is upset
- Offering congratulations or praise, such as with a pat on the back or handshake
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- When demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching

In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in any given situation, staff should use their professional judgement, and have regard to:

- Our school's child protection and safeguarding policy
- The specific circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present

Factors including, but not limited to:

- The pupil's age
- Any known vulnerabilities, including whether the pupil has special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
- Whether any alternative strategies that don't involve physical contact can be used

### **3.2 Seclusion**

Seclusion is used only when necessary to reduce immediate risk, and always in line with PRICE principles.

It is:

- Not a punishment
- Not used as a threat
- Only used when a pupil is in a state of significant dysregulation

During seclusion:

- Pupils are supervised at all times
- The environment remains safe and non-threatening
- Staff continue to use PRICE de-escalation strategies

The intervention ends as soon as it is safe to do so.

As defined above, 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.

We only use seclusion as a safety measure when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. Seclusion is not used as a threat or punishment. Seclusion is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. Please see our behaviour policy for information on our response to misbehaviour.

During seclusion:

- The pupil will be secluded in a safe place that does not feel threatening or intimidating to them e.g sensory room, hall
- The pupil will be supervised at all times, by at least 1 member of staff

As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil will be allowed to leave. Any incident involving the use of seclusion will be recorded and reported in accordance with the procedures set out in section 12 of this policy.

#### **4. Roles and responsibilities**

##### **4.1 The governing board**

The governing board 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 our school
- 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

##### **4.2 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

##### **4.3 All staff**

All members of staff are responsible for:

Applying PRICE de-escalation strategies first

- Ensuring they use restrictive interventions only in line with training
- Reflecting on and learning from incidents through a PRICE-informed debrief process

- 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

#### **4.4 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 (see sections 12.2 and 12.3 of this policy)

#### **4.5 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
- Ensuring that adjustments align with PRICE and Equality Act duties

### **5. Acceptable uses of force**

All our school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain situations. Staff may use reasonable force where necessary, but must do so in line with:

- PRICE principles
- Training guidance
- Least restrictive practice

Force must always be:

- Proportionate
- Time-limited
- Risk-assessed

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

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.

We will ensure staff are adequately trained and that risk assessments are carried out where necessary. See section 11 of this policy for information on training and risk assessments.

Any significant incident involving the use of force will be recorded and reported in accordance with the procedures set out in section 12 of this policy.

## **6. Unacceptable uses of force**

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

Our staff understand that any form of force or restraint carries a risk of physical and psychological harm, so we always avoid using these measures where possible.

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

- Staff using force for the purpose of punishment
- Staff 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
- Staff 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

Section 5 of this policy sets out the instances where staff may use reasonable force. Section 9 of this policy provides guidance for staff on what to consider before using it.

## **7. 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.

They **can** use reasonable force 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. They **cannot** use reasonable force 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. Please see our behaviour policy for more information on how we conduct searches.

## **8. Prevention and de-escalation strategies**

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

Our whole-school approach includes:

- Consideration of how our 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 we use 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

### 8.1 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

## 9. Deciding when the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate

### 9.1 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 the de-escalation techniques outlined in section 8.1 of this policy 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

## **9.2 Pupil and staff welfare**

### **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, our 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.

Our 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.

## **10. Considerations for pupils with SEND**

We 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.

Our school is committed to understanding what might trigger challenging behaviour in pupils with SEND, and to providing the right support and an inclusive environment.

We 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. Our school is aware of its 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.

We 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. We will also work with the pupil, 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, we 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's 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

## **11. Training and risk assessments**

All relevant staff will:

- Receive PRICE training
- Be refreshed regularly
- Demonstrate competence in:
  - De-escalation
  - Safe intervention
  - Risk awareness

Risk assessments will align with PRICE principles of prevention and safety.

Our 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. We also have a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of our staff. Therefore, we carry out risk assessments 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.

## **12. Recording and reporting arrangements**

We have a legal duty to record and report all:

- Significant incidents involving force (see section 3 of this policy for a definition of 'significant incident')
- Seclusion incidents
- Restraint incidents

### **12.1 Recording incidents**

Our school has a clear process in place for recording the incidents listed above.

All incidents when restraint is used should be recorded as soon as possible in a numbered and bound Book (within 24 hours) and the Headteacher notified.

Reports should be recorded in the book and should include:

- Name(s) of pupil(s) involved / class

- Location of incident
- Date and time
- Staff involved
- Details of events leading to restraint
- Steps taken to prevent restraint
- Reasons for intervention
- Description of restraint used
- Pupil(s) response and outcome
- Details of any injury and / or damage
- Date and Time parent informed of incident
- By whom
- Parent response
- Statements from any witnesses should also be included
- Any staff injuries sustained will be recorded separately, in accordance with Health and Safety procedures.
- Pupils who have been restrained will be entitled to record their views when they have calmed down, and will be given assistance to do so if necessary
- Parents will always be informed of any incident with their child involving the use of physical restraint and will be given an opportunity to discuss the incident. How and when parents are informed is the decision of the Headteacher.

Staff must record incidents in writing, 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.

## **12.2 Reporting incidents to parents/carers**

When reporting an incident to parents/carers, we will take the following steps:

We will inform parents/carers about an incident as soon as we can after it happens and 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.

There are 2 exceptions to this:

- If a member of staff thinks that telling the pupil's parents/carers would likely result in significant harm to that pupil. In these cases, we will report the incident to any parent(s)/carer(s) who it can be reported to without resulting in significant harm or, if there are none, to the local authority where the pupil ordinarily resides (see section 12.3 of this policy)

When we report significant incidents involving force to parents/carers, we 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

When reporting to parents/carers, we will have regard to data protection requirements when deciding what information to share. For example, we will not include any identifying details of any other pupil.

## **12.3 Reporting incidents to the local authority**

In cases where we have assessed that an incident needs to be reported to the local authority where the pupil ordinarily resides (as outlined in section 12.2), this report will include all the information that we

would normally share with the pupil's parents/carers, as well as the reasons why we thought it was 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, we will report the incident to the relevant local authority in addition to the parents/carers (unless we deem it unsafe to inform the parents/carers, as set out in section 12.2 of this policy).

### **13. Complaints and allegations**

Any complaints about the use of restrictive interventions will be handled through our school's complaints policy.

We take any allegation of inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions made against a member of staff very seriously. We will deal with allegations in line with the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education.

### **15. 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

## Appendix 1

## Positive Handling Plan

For assessing and managing foreseeable risks for children who are likely to need Restrictive Physical Intervention

Name:	D.O.B	Date:			
<i>Triggers / Behaviours / Situations likely to result in Physical intervention:</i>					
<b>Strategies to use to de-escalate the situation and avoid physical intervention</b>					
Chill out time		Planned ignoring		Negotiate	
Physical Timer		Praise		Reassurance	
Count down		Remove stimulus / trigger		Consequences	
Distraction		Take a walk		Supportive touch	
Other:					
<b>De-briefing process following incident</b>					
Signatures					
Child (Where appropriate) _____					
Parent / Guardian _____					
Head teacher _____					
Date _____ Review date _____					