Policy Information Sheet

Name of Policy:	**Holding Safely Policy**
Delegated Authority	☒ Trust Board ☐ Nominated Committee ☐ CEO ☐ CFO ☐ Other _____
Policy review cycle	☒ Annual ☐ 3 years ☐ 4 years ☐ Other _____
Statutory policy	☐ Yes ☒ No
Published online	☐ Statutory ☐ Trust recommended ☒ No

Document Control	
Created by (author)	T. Keates
Date created	March 2026
Approved by	Trust Board
Date approved	

Document History			
Version	Author	Revisions	Final approval date
1.2	R. Kitson	September 2026 compliance update: DfE restrictive interventions guidance, statutory recording/reporting duties, KCSIE 2026 and strengthened SEND/equality safeguards.	06.10.2026

Holding Safely Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff, pupils and parents/carers understand the expectations, legal framework and safe practice relating to restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, restraint and seclusion. The policy promotes a safe, supportive and respectful environment in which restrictive intervention is minimised through early support, prevention and de-escalation.

This policy prioritises:

- the safety, dignity, welfare and rights of every pupil
- the prevention and reduction of restrictive interventions
- a child-centred, trauma-informed, relational and inclusive approach to behaviour
- reasonable adjustments and proactive planning for pupils with SEND, medical conditions, mental health needs or other vulnerabilities.

Restrictive intervention will only be used when it is lawful, necessary and proportionate in the individual circumstances. Staff should use the least restrictive option and no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time. Where there is an immediate risk, staff are not required to delay action in order to attempt strategies that would be unsafe or ineffective.

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- causing injury to themselves or others
- committing a criminal offence
- damaging property
- causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Headteachers and staff they authorise may also use reasonable force, where the statutory conditions are met, when searching for legally prohibited items. Force must not be used merely to search for an item banned only under school rules. Staff must follow the school's Searching, Screening and Confiscation arrangements.

1. Policy Statement

At Hartlepool Free School, we are fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

We recognise that behaviour is a form of communication, particularly for pupils with SEMH, autism and additional needs. As such:

- our approach is proactive, preventative and relational
- we aim to identify triggers early and intervene supportively

- we actively work to reduce the need for restrictive interventions over time
- we seek and use pupil voice, wherever practicable, to understand what helps the pupil feel safe and regulate.

Restrictive interventions:

- must never be used as punishment
- must not be used simply to secure compliance where the legal conditions for reasonable force or seclusion are not met
- must be lawful, necessary, proportionate and the least restrictive option reasonably available
- must take account of the pupil's welfare, dignity, SEND, medical needs, communication needs, known trauma and equality considerations.

We adopt the principles of Team Teach, placing emphasis on:

- de-escalation
- positive relationships
- safe, ethical and minimal use of physical intervention.

2. Legislative Context and Guidance

This policy is informed by:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, including sections 93 and 93A
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Department for Education: Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (effective from 1 April 2026)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (effective from 1 September 2026)
- Equality Act 2010, including duties to make reasonable adjustments and, where applicable, the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations
- Behaviour in Schools guidance
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance
- HM Government: Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention
- School Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- School Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy
- Team Teach training and practice framework.

In line with the 2026 guidance, the school will:

- actively monitor and analyse patterns of restrictive intervention
- take reasonable steps to reduce frequency and identify alternatives over time
- ensure senior leadership oversight and Trust Board scrutiny
- identify any disproportionate use in relation to pupils with protected characteristics, SEN or other vulnerabilities
- use incident learning to inform staff development, risk assessment, behaviour support planning and environmental adjustments
- make this policy available to staff, pupils and parents/carers.

Definitions

Restrictive intervention: A means to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. It is an umbrella term covering physical and non-physical actions intended to restrain movement.

Reasonable force: A legal term covering physical restrictive interventions. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, depending on the circumstances.

Significant incident: Any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff. This includes where physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

Seclusion: A non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and preventing them from leaving by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave.

Restraint: A non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may occur with or without direct physical contact.

Appropriate physical contact: Ordinary, non-restrictive contact which may be appropriate in context, for example first aid, comforting a distressed pupil, guiding a pupil who has chosen to move to a regulation space, or demonstrating a technique.

Voluntary time/space for regulation: A pupil choosing, or agreeing, to move to a quieter or safer space and remaining free to leave. This is not seclusion.

3. Principles for Restrictive Intervention

Before and during any restrictive intervention, staff should consider whether the action is necessary, proportionate and attentive to the pupil's welfare.

Prevention is prioritised: Individual risk assessments, CASS Plans/behaviour support plans, environmental adaptations and reasonable adjustments should be used where an identified risk exists.

De-escalation is used where safe and practicable: Staff should consider more effective and less restrictive strategies before intervening physically, unless the urgency of the situation makes delay unsafe.

There is a lawful purpose: Reasonable force must only be used within the legal circumstances set out in this policy. Seclusion has a narrower purpose and is addressed separately in section 8.

The response is necessary and proportionate: Staff use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time.

The pupil's welfare is considered: Staff consider medical conditions, SEND, communication needs, age, size, sensory needs, known trauma and other vulnerabilities, as well as relevant equality implications.

Dignity and communication are maintained: Where possible, staff calmly explain what is happening and why and adapt communication so the pupil can understand and respond.

The intervention is stopped or changed promptly: If risk reduces, or the intervention is escalating the situation or causing greater harm, staff should reduce, stop or change their approach as soon as it is safe.

4. Prevention and De-escalation

Prevention and de-escalation are the preferred response wherever they can be used safely.

Staff may use:

- calm, clear and respectful communication
- active listening and validation of feelings
- reduced language or non-verbal communication where appropriate
- distraction, humour or redirection where appropriate
- structured choices and processing time
- planned withdrawal or voluntary access to safe/regulation spaces
- removal or reduction of distressing stimuli
- regulation strategies tailored to individual needs
- support from a familiar or trusted adult.

Staff Training

All staff will receive appropriate training and information on prevention, de-escalation, safeguarding and the lawful use of reasonable force. Staff who are likely to need to use planned restrictive interventions will receive suitable practical training through Team Teach or another approved programme reflecting the principles of current DfE guidance.

- understanding behaviour as communication
- trauma-informed and relational practice
- de-escalation and preventative strategies
- safe and lawful restrictive intervention techniques
- dynamic risk assessment
- recognising medical, communication and SEND-related risk
- post-incident support, reflection and recording/reporting duties.

Training is recorded and monitored. All staff are trained annually; any new staff are trained in batches through the year and cannot take part in physical restraint until trained by Team Teach. 12 staff are stained in advanced techniques and also reviewed annually A lack of formal physical-intervention training does not remove a member of staff's statutory power to use reasonable force in an emergency where the legal conditions are met; however, staff must not use techniques for which they have not been trained where safer lawful alternatives are available.

5. Use of Physical Restraint / Reasonable Force (Holding Safely)

Where physical intervention is necessary:

- planned restrictive interventions should normally be undertaken by appropriately trained staff
- emergency action may be taken by any member of school staff where reasonable force is lawful and necessary

- the intervention must use no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time
- staff should continue to assess whether the intervention remains necessary and proportionate.

Staff must:

- monitor the pupil's breathing, circulation, distress and medical presentation throughout
- avoid any position or action that affects the airway, breathing or circulation, including pressure to the neck or abdomen
- recognise that ground restraint carries particular risk; if a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release or reposition to a safer alternative as quickly as possible
- communicate calmly throughout, using adapted verbal or non-verbal communication where needed
- cease, reduce or change the intervention as soon as the relevant risk reduces.

The school strictly prohibits:

- the use of force for punishment
- pain-inducing techniques as a behaviour-management strategy
- deliberate restriction of the airway, breathing or circulation
- unsafe holds or positions.

6. Recording, Reporting and Post-Incident Review

6.1 What must be recorded

The school will maintain written procedures for recording restrictive interventions. Each significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil must be recorded as soon as practicable. Every incident of seclusion and every restraint incident, including restraint without direct physical contact, must also be recorded. Staff involved should endeavour to complete the record no later than the same day.

The record should include, as a minimum:

- the names of the pupil and staff directly involved
- the pupil's relevant needs or circumstances, including identified SEND and SEN status code where applicable
- the time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- a factual account of what happened, including antecedents, known or potential triggers and prevention/de-escalation strategies used
- why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
- where force was used, the type and degree of force applied
- details of any physical injuries or other adverse impacts
- post-incident support and any medical assessment/treatment provided.

The school may also record pupil and witness accounts, parental notification details and follow-up actions so that incidents can be evaluated and practice improved.

6.2 Reporting to parents/carers

Parents/carers must be informed as soon as practicable after a reportable incident and the school should endeavour to do this no later than the same day. Information should be provided in writing. The reporting duty applies even where the use of restrictive intervention has previously been discussed or agreed within a pupil's plan.

For a significant use of force, the written report should include at least:

- time, date, location and approximate duration
- why the intervention was assessed as necessary
- the type and degree of force used
- details of any physical injuries, where applicable.

Where an incident is seclusion or non-force restraint, the school will provide the written information required by the 2025 Regulations. The same information does not need to be reported twice where a restraint incident also amounts to a significant use of force.

Exception: if informing a parent would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil, the incident must instead be reported to any parent to whom it can be reported without that serious harm; if there is no such parent, it must be reported to the local authority in whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident.

6.3 Medical attention, debrief and safeguarding

- Where appropriate, pupils and staff should receive a medical assessment and treatment for injuries as soon as possible. Injuries will also be recorded and reported in line with the school's health and safety procedures.
- A supportive pupil debrief and a reflective staff debrief should take place as soon as practicable. Where possible, the wider follow-up conversation should be facilitated by a member of staff who was not directly involved in the incident.
- The purpose of debrief is to understand what happened and why, learn from separate pupil and staff reflections, repair relationships and identify how future incidents may be prevented.
- Pupils who witness an incident and are distressed or may have been affected should be offered appropriate support.
- Any safeguarding concern arising from an incident, including concern about the conduct of a member of staff, must be managed under the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and KCSIE 2026.

7. Support, Planning and Monitoring

Following any incident, the pupil's CASS Plan/behaviour support plan and risk assessment will be reviewed where appropriate, with the pupil and parent/carer involved as far as practicable.

Additional support may include:

- pastoral or therapeutic input
- SEND adjustments
- environmental adaptations
- communication support
- multi-agency advice or review.

Senior leaders will:

- analyse data on restrictive interventions to identify trends, repeat triggers and opportunities for prevention
- review whether support plans and de-escalation approaches are effective
- identify staff learning and development needs
- monitor pupil and staff wellbeing after incidents

- identify any disproportionate use relating to protected characteristics, SEND or other vulnerabilities.

The Trust Board/proprietor will:

- take all reasonable steps to ensure that the school's recording and reporting procedures are complied with
- regularly review and interrogate restrictive-intervention data
- seek assurance that practice is lawful, child-centred and directed toward reducing restrictive intervention where possible
- consider the limits of small datasets and avoid over-interpreting very small subgroups.

8. Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and preventing them from leaving. It is distinct from a pupil voluntarily choosing a regulation space, and from disciplinary removal from a classroom.

Seclusion should only be used:

- as a safety measure to protect others from harm
- when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation and the immediate circumstances make seclusion necessary and proportionate.

Where seclusion is used, it must:

- never be implemented through threat of punishment
- take place in a safe setting that does not feel threatening or intimidating
- be continuously supervised
- last only for as long as the immediate risk of harm remains
- end as soon as the immediate risk has reduced and the pupil can leave safely
- be recorded and reported in writing in accordance with section 6.

9. Complaints and Allegations

Complaints about the use of restrictive intervention will be considered under the school's complaints procedure. Where a concern or allegation is made that a member of staff may have used force or another restrictive intervention inappropriately, the school will follow the procedures in Part Four of KCSIE 2026, including liaison with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where the harm threshold may be met.

10. Conclusion

Restrictive intervention, including holding safely, is an exceptional safeguarding and safety measure. Hartlepool Free School is committed to minimising its use, promoting positive relationships and emotional regulation, protecting pupils' rights and dignity, and ensuring that any intervention is lawful, necessary, proportionate and subject to transparent recording, reporting, review and oversight.

Appendix A:

Notification of Use of Reasonable Force

Student Name:	

Incident Details

Date and Time of the Incident:	
Location:	
Details of Physical Intervention/Seclusion:	

Reasonable Use of Force *(please tick all that apply)*

- ☐ To prevent the student from hurting themselves
- ☐ To prevent the student from hurting others
- ☐ To prevent serious damage to property
- ☐ To maintain good order and discipline
- ☐ To prevent absconding/risk

De-escalation and Alternatives Attempted:	
First Aid, Injury, Monitoring and Wellbeing:	

Important Information for Parents/Carers

Physical Intervention is always a last resort and each incident in school is investigated. The school has a legal duty to safeguard pupils and staff. Reasonable force is only used, when necessary, in line with current government guidance, and is always proportionate to the risk presented.

Post Incident Support

Offer a calm environment, reassurance and familiar calming activities. Listen if your child wants to talk, without pressing them to revisit the incident. Please tell us about any ongoing distress or worries about returning to school. Monitor for pain, bruising, swelling, reduced movement or changes in behaviour. Contact NHS 111 or your GP for new, worsening or concerning symptoms, explaining that physical intervention occurred. Call 999 for difficulty breathing, unconsciousness, difficulty waking, a seizure or heavy bleeding. If your child hit their head, seek advice from NHS 111 for vomiting, dizziness or other worrying symptoms. School will review the incident and your child's support arrangements. Please contact school to discuss any concerns and inform us of any symptoms or medical advice received afterwards.