



Policy Information Sheet

Name of Policy:	Holding Safely Policy
Delegated Authority	☒ Trust Board ☐ Nominated Committee ☐ CEO ☐ CFO ☐ Other _____
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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff, students, and parents/carers understand the expectations, legal framework, and safe practices relating to the use of **restrictive interventions**, including **reasonable force**, within our school. This policy aims to promote a safe, supportive, and respectful environment for all students, where physical restraint is only used as a last resort, after other de-escalation strategies have been attempted and exhausted.

This policy prioritises:

- The **safety, dignity, and rights** of all pupils
- The **prevention and reduction** of restrictive interventions
- A **trauma-informed, relational approach** to behaviour

Physical intervention will **only ever be used as a last resort**, when there is an **immediate and significant risk of harm**, and after all reasonable preventative and de-escalation strategies have been attempted or are judged unsafe to attempt.

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from:

1. Causing injury to themselves or others
2. Committing a criminal offence
3. Damaging property
4. Seriously disrupting good order and discipline

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**.

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**

Restrictive interventions:

- **Must never be used as punishment**
- Must **only be used to prevent harm**
- Must be **lawful, necessary, proportionate, and the least restrictive option available**

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** – provides legal authority to use reasonable force
- **Restrictive Interventions Guidance** – emphasises prevention, proportionality, and safeguarding oversight
- **Equality Act 2010** – ensures non-discriminatory practice and reasonable adjustments
- **Behaviour in Schools Guidance** – sets expectations for behaviour and discipline
- **Team Teach** – provides accredited training and safe practice frameworks
- **KCSiE – Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025**
- **School Safeguarding Policy**
- **School Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy**

In line with 2026 guidance, the school will:

- Actively **monitor and analyse patterns of restrictive interventions**
- Take steps to **reduce frequency over time**
- Ensure **senior leadership oversight and governance scrutiny**
- Embed **pupil voice and parental involvement**

Definitions:

- **Restrictive Intervention:** Any action that restricts a pupil's movement, liberty or freedom to act
- **Physical Restraint:** Direct physical contact intended to prevent or restrict movement
- **Non-restrictive Physical Intervention:** Physical contact such as guiding or prompting
- **Seclusion:** Preventing a pupil from leaving a space
- **Time Out:** A voluntary strategy where a pupil removes themselves
- **Significant Incident:** Any incident involving restraint, force, or seclusion

3. Principles of Restraint

Restrictive intervention (including holding safely) will only be used where:

1. **Prevention has been prioritised**
 - a. Individual risk assessments, behaviour plans (CASS Pland), and reasonable adjustments are in place
2. **De-escalation has been attempted (where safe to do so)**
 - a. Or the situation is so urgent that delay would increase risk
3. **There is an immediate risk of harm**
 - a. To the pupil, others, or serious property damage
4. **It is necessary and proportionate**
 - a. The **least restrictive option** is always chosen
5. **It is time-limited**

- a. Intervention stops **as soon as it is safe**
- 6. **Dignity and respect are maintained**
 - a. Avoiding pain, humiliation, or distress wherever possible
- 7. **It is not used as punishment or compliance**

4. De-escalation Techniques

De-escalation is always the **first and preferred response**.

Staff will use:

- Calm, clear, and respectful communication
- Active listening and validation of feelings
- Distraction, humour, or redirection (where appropriate)
- Offering structured choices
- Planned withdrawal or safe spaces
- Regulation strategies tailored to individual needs

Staff Training

All staff will receive regular, accredited training through **Team Teach**, including:

- Understanding behaviour as communication
- Trauma-informed practice
- De-escalation and relational approaches
- Safe and lawful restrictive intervention techniques
- Dynamic risk assessment
- Post-incident support and reflection

Training is:

- **Refreshed regularly**
- **Recorded and monitored**
- **Required before staff use physical intervention**

5. Use of Physical Restraint (Holding Safely)

Where physical intervention is necessary:

- Only **trained staff** should use agreed techniques (unless emergency action is required)
- The intervention must:
 - Be **reasonable, proportionate, and necessary**
 - Use the **minimum force required**
 - Be applied for the **shortest time possible**

Staff must:

- Continuously **monitor breathing, distress, and medical needs**
- Avoid **restrictive positions that impede breathing**
- Communicate throughout the incident to reassure the pupil
- **Cease immediately** when risk reduces

The school **strictly prohibits**:

- Pain-inducing techniques
- Deliberate use of force as punishment
- Unsafe holds or positions

6. Reporting and Recording

All incidents of restrictive intervention must be:

Recorded promptly and accurately, including:

- Antecedents, behaviour, and risk
- De-escalation strategies attempted
- Type and duration of intervention
- Staff and pupils involved
- Any injuries or concerns
- Pupil voice (where possible)

Reported and reviewed:

- Logged on the school's safeguarding/behaviour system
- Reviewed by **senior leaders (DSL/SLT)**
- Monitored for **patterns, frequency, and disproportionality**

Parents/Carers:

- Informed **on the same day (or as soon as reasonably practicable)**
- Offered opportunity to discuss the incident

Debriefing:

- **Pupil debrief** (restorative and supportive)
- **Staff debrief** (reflective and procedural)

7. Support and Monitoring

Following any incident:

- The pupil's **Behaviour Support Plan (CASS Plan) / Risk Assessment** will be reviewed
- Additional support may include:

- Pastoral or therapeutic input
- SEN adjustments
- Environmental adaptations

The school will:

- Analyse data to **reduce future incidents**
- Provide **ongoing staff supervision and support**
- Escalate concerns through safeguarding procedures if required

Governors and senior leaders will:

- Receive **regular reports on restrictive interventions**
- Hold leaders accountable for **reducing use over time**

8. Seclusion

Seclusion is defined as:

The supervised confinement of a pupil, away from others, where they are prevented from leaving.

Seclusion will only be used:

- As a **protective measure to manage immediate risk**
- When a pupil is experiencing **high levels of dysregulation**

Seclusion must:

- Be **time-limited and continuously supervised**
- Take place in a **safe, calm, and non-threatening environment**
- **End immediately** once risk reduces

Seclusion must **never be used**:

- As punishment
- As a behaviour control strategy
- Without clear justification and recording

All incidents of seclusion must be **recorded and reviewed** in line with this policy.

9. Conclusion

Restrictive intervention, including holding safely, is an **exceptional safeguarding measure**.

At Hartlepool Free School, we are committed to:

- Minimising the use of restraint
- Promoting positive relationships and emotional regulation
- Ensuring all practice is **lawful, ethical, and child-centred**

Through high-quality training, robust monitoring, and a culture of reflection, we aim to create a **safe, respectful, and supportive environment** where all pupils can thrive.

Notification of Use of Reasonable Force (SEND)

Student Name:	
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Incident Details

Date and Time of the Incident:	
Location:	
Staff Involved:	

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
- ☐ Other (please specify _____)

Description of the incident: <i>(provide a factual account of what happened, including events leading up to the incident).</i>	
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Description of Reasonable Force Used: <i>(include the type of intervention, duration, and how it was proportionate to the risk presented)</i>	
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Description of use of seclusion <i>(include the duration, room, how safety was monitored and how it was proportionate to the risk presented)</i>	
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De-escalation and Alternatives Considered:

(What strategies were attempted or considered before reasonable force was used)

- ☐ Use of visual supports
- ☐ Time and space offered
- ☐ Sensory regulation strategy (e.g. movement break, quiet space)
- ☐ Use of familiar or trusted adult
- ☐ Adjusted language / reduced verbal input
- ☐ Distraction or redirection
- ☐ Other (please specify _____)

Outcome and follow up

Was anyone injured

- ☐ Yes *(please give details below)*
- ☐ No

Details of any injury, first aid provided, or medical attention sought:

Post Incident Support for the student
*(regulation time, restorative conversation,
adult check in, sensory support)*

Parental Contact

Parent/Carer Informed on:	
Method of Contact:	
Name of staff member who made contact:	

Important Information for Parents/Carers

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. If you would like to discuss this incident further, please contact the school using the details above.