

# Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy



**RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL**  
**INSPIRE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Riverside Bridge School there are children whose disabilities can be associated with severe behavioural difficulties and who can present behaviour that may necessitate the use of restrictive physical interventions to prevent injury to themselves or others or damage to property.

This policy has been prepared with direct reference to the following documents:

- Guidance on the Use of Restrictive Physical Interventions for Pupils with Severe Behavioural Difficulties. <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sen>.
- Guidance on the Use of Restrictive Physical Interventions for Staff Working with Children and Adults who Display Extreme Behaviour in Association with Learning Disability and/or Autistic Spectrum Disorders <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sen>.
- DfE Circular 10/98 - 'Section 550A of the Education Act 1996: The Use of Force to Control or Restrain Pupils' [http://www.dfes.gov.uk/circulars/10\\_98/part1.htm](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/circulars/10_98/part1.htm)
- Department of Health Guidance on the use of Physical Interventions for Staff Working with Children and Adults with Learning Disability and/or Autism <http://www.doh.gov.uk/learningdisabilities/dgapp1.htm>
- Barking and Dagenham Positive Handling Guidance.
- British Institute of Learning difficulties (BILD): Physical Interventions – A Policy Framework

This policy connects to and is consistent with our other Policies, especially those on Behaviour Management, Behaviour Support documents, Health and Safety and Child Protection.

This policy has been updated to reflect the Department for Education statutory guidance *Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools* (April 2026), issued under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, and the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025. This guidance replaces *Use of reasonable force* (2013).

## 2. RATIONALE

At Riverside Bridge School, our staff understand that they could be involved with supporting incidents in which our pupils may display challenging physical behaviours. All staff are aware that we are a school who trains all staff in TeamTeach positive handling and physical intervention and the use of restrictive physical intervention must be reasonable, necessary and proportionate and comply with national and local guidelines at all times.

This policy has been put in place to ensure that all Riverside Bridge School staff understand their professional duty and responsibility when Physical Intervention is completed. In order for all staff to understand this, TeamTeach training is delivered to all staff and refreshed/updated accordingly.

Parents/carers need to know that their children and those who are working with them are safe. They need to know that they will be properly informed if their child is the subject of physical intervention; and they need to know the nature of the intervention and the rationale for its use.

When a physical intervention takes place, staff will complete a physical intervention home slip and send home within the pupil's home school diary.

This policy sets out to clarify the options open to staff when all the normal systems have failed or when there is a clear emergency. If staff operate within the policy and use appropriate physical

interventions, they can be free of undue worry about the risks of legal action against them and reassured that the school will offer support if they are challenged. However, within Riverside Special School the use of physical force that is unwarranted, excessive or punitive is not acceptable. Failure to comply with this policy, when considering or using physical force, will be subject to Child Protection Procedures as laid down by the Safeguarding Children's Board.

Riverside Bridge School recognises the importance of accurate recording, timely reporting and systematic review of restrictive interventions to support transparency, accountability, pupil welfare and continuous improvement. All significant incidents involving the use of force, restraint or seclusion will therefore be recorded and reported in line with statutory requirements.

### **3. SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS**

At Riverside Bridge School we promote values which place the paramount of the child's best interest at the core of our work. To achieve consistency with these values within this policy we set out to ensure that physical interventions:

- are used as infrequently as possible and only when deemed reasonable, necessary and proportionate to the risk and hazards
- are only employed in the best interests of the pupils and students;
- when used, everything possible is done to prevent injury and to maintain the individual's sense of dignity.

To ensure the use of physical intervention is minimised, preventative strategies will be adopted. This approach is adopted from TeamTeach training, with the approach that when managing behaviours, there should be 95% de-escalation strategies implemented before the physical intervention is adopted. Prevention will be achieved by:

- ensuring that the number of staff deployed, and their level of competence corresponds to the needs of children and the likelihood that physical interventions will be needed;
- helping pupils avoid situations and triggers known to provoke 'challenging' behaviour;
- delivery of a properly planned and differentiated curriculum that provides appropriate levels of challenge to all pupils;
- creating opportunities for pupils to engage in meaningful activities which include opportunities for choice and a sense of achievement;
- maintenance of an effective school behaviour policy that is known and understood by staff and pupils;
- development of positive behaviour support plans linked to the Zones of Regulation;
- development of staff expertise in working with pupils who present 'challenging' behaviours;
- recognition of the early stages of a behavioural sequence likely to develop into 'challenging' behaviour and use of 'diffusion' techniques to avert any further escalation.

#### **Definition of a Significant Incident**

For the purposes of this policy, a significant incident is any incident where the use of force goes beyond ordinary, appropriate physical contact (such as guiding, comforting or first aid). This includes situations where physical contact or force is used to enforce or maintain a restriction on a pupil's movement or liberty. All significant incidents are subject to statutory recording and reporting requirements.

### **4. REASONABLE PHYSICAL INTERVENTION**

At Riverside Bridge School we recognise the distinction between physical contact or touch, used appropriately in everyday situations to support, encourage, guide or comfort a pupil, and the use of force to restrict movement or to disengage from pupils whose behaviour presents a clear risk of injury.

Any physical intervention must be proportionate to both the behaviour of the individual to be controlled, and the nature of the harm they might cause. These judgements have to be made at the time, taking due account of all the circumstances, including any known history of other events, involving the individual to be controlled.

The Department for Education statutory guidance *Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools* (April 2026) states that schools can use reasonable force to:

- prevent a pupil leaving the classroom when allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others;
- prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground; and
- restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

Schools cannot use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

TeamTeach training provides staff with the training and knowledge that there are 5 different reasons to which staff would physically intervene:

- to prevent harm to self
- to prevent harm to others
- to prevent significant damage to property (including their own)
- to prevent a criminal act
- to maintain good order

Staff at Riverside Bridge School receive regular training to ensure that the use of physical intervention will be rare and only applied in exceptional circumstances when a particular need arises. It should not become habitual or routine and must always be subject to recording, reporting and post-incident review where it constitutes a significant incident.

Reasonable physical intervention will:

- always be the minimum force required (what is needed and not more) to prevent damage or injury or restore good order;
- involve minimal use of pain or discomfort;
- be the least intrusive method which is consistent with the safety of staff and pupils (disengagement strategies);
- not subsequently lead to feelings of guilt or regret by the member of staff;
- be something they would be happy for a colleague to witness;
- have been considered and agreed;
- have been taught and practiced in training;
- take account of the age, understanding and gender of the pupil.

4.7 Acceptable forms of intervention at Riverside Bridge School include but are not limited to:

- leading or guiding a pupil by the hand or arm, shepherding them with a hand in the centre of the back (low level guide)

- using a physical intervention with a pupil who has lost control until they are calm and safe;
- physically moving between and separating two pupils;
- blocking a pupil's path;
- use of reasonable force to remove a weapon or dangerous object from a pupil's grasp;
- any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of 'reasonable force' where there is immediate risk of injury – for example to prevent a pupil running into a busy road or hitting or hurting someone;
- TeamTeach terminology:
  - Caring C's
  - Help Hug
  - 2 Person Single Elbow
  - 1 Person Double Elbow
  - 2 Person Double Elbow
  - 2 Person Single Elbow in Chairs
  - Bite response
  - Arm hold response
  - Neck hold response
  - Hair hold response
  - Clothes hold response

At Riverside Bridge School it is acceptable for doors to have double or high handles to ensure pupil safety, most doors also have a fob with an emergency release button for safety, and external doors may be locked for security purposes, when pupils are supervised and with an adult.

Withdrawal is an acceptable strategy where a pupil is removed from a difficult situation and accompanied while they calm down.

Bearing in mind the whole time their own safety, staff may need to protect themselves as well as that of others and of the child who is the subject of any restraint or other intervention.

Staff are not expected to put themselves in danger by physically intervening and removing other pupils and themselves from a source of danger may be the proper thing to do. We appreciate the integrity of our staff and value their efforts to rectify situations that are difficult and in which they exercise their duty of care for their pupils. However, we do not require them to go beyond what is reasonable.

Normally, only staff who have been trained to an appropriate level will use restrictive physical interventions. This includes agency members who have been taught within their own companies. However, in an emergency the use of force is reasonable, appropriate and necessary, if it is the only way to prevent injury or to prevent an offence being committed. In these circumstances, the use of force should be reasonable and proportionate and will be reviewed after the event to safeguard the child and the adult.

Where there is clear documented evidence that particular sequences of behaviour rapidly escalate into serious violence, the use of a restrictive physical intervention at an early stage in the sequence will be viewed as justified if it is clear that:

- primary prevention has not been effective;
- the risks associated with not using a restrictive physical intervention are greater than the risks of using a restrictive physical intervention;

- other appropriate methods, which do not involve restrictive physical interventions, have been tried without success.

## **5. UNWARRANTED PHYSICAL INTERVENTION**

Unacceptable forms of physical intervention at Riverside Bridge School include (but is not limited to):

- any physical intervention designed to cause pain or injury;
- any form of corporal punishment, slapping, punching or kicking;
- holding by the neck or collar, or otherwise restricting the ability to breathe;
- holding by the hair or an ear;
- twisting or forcing limbs against a joint;
- tripping up a pupil;
- holding an arm out at neck or head height to stop them;
- holding a pupil face down on the ground or sitting on them;
- shutting or locking a pupil in a room, except in extreme situations whilst summoning support.
- acts of aggression or anger by the user;
- force beyond what is needed to set a situation right, however aggrieved or cross a member of staff may be;
- seclusion where a pupil is forced to spend time alone against their will except for short periods of time in extreme situations whilst help is obtained;
- physical interventions used to achieve a search of clothing or property.

Staff should also avoid touching or holding a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent.

All of the above interventions are indefensible and if applied will be subject to investigation within the Child Protection Framework laid down by the Safeguarding Children's Board.

## **6. RISK ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING USE OF PHYSICAL INTERVENTIONS**

Some pupils at Riverside Bridge behave in ways that make it necessary to consider the use of restrictive physical intervention as part of a behaviour management plan.

Where there is a foreseeable risk that a pupil could behave in such a way as to require restrictive physical intervention a risk assessment will be undertaken.

Among the main risks to pupils are that a physical intervention will:

- be used unnecessarily, that is when other less intrusive methods could have achieved the desired outcome
- cause injury
- cause pain, distress or psychological trauma
- become routine, rather than exceptional methods of management
- increase the risk of abuse
- undermine the dignity of the staff or pupils or otherwise humiliate or degrade those involved
- create distrust and undermine personal relationships

The main risks to staff include the following:

- as a result of applying a physical intervention they suffer injury
- as a result of applying a physical intervention they experience distress or psychological trauma
- the legal justification for the use of a physical intervention is challenged in the courts
- disciplinary action

The main risks of not intervening include:

- staff will be in breach of the duty of care
- service users, staff or other people will be injured or abused
- serious damage to property will occur
- the possibility of litigation in respect of these matters

Whenever it is foreseeable that a pupil might require a physical intervention, the risk assessment will identify the benefits and risks associated with different intervention strategies and ways of supporting the person concerned.

Any member of staff who may have to use a physical intervention will always be fully de-briefed.

The school's behaviour policy and behaviour support guidelines will be referred to when developing and implementing behaviour management plans (Zones of Regulation Plans).

All behaviour management plans (Zones of Regulation Plans) will be regularly reviewed by relevant staff. Behaviour lead completes whole school review of first edits at the start of each academic ready to be shared with parents/carers and signed.

Where there is an identified or foreseeable risk that restrictive interventions may be required, reasonable adjustments will be considered and implemented for our pupils with SEND in line with the Equality Act 2010. Risk assessments and behaviour support plans will be reviewed following any significant incident to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

## **7. POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT PLANS**

Our version of a positive behaviour support plan is the use of our Zones of Regulation Plan and our Risk assessments these documents will emphasise strategies to reduce or prevent the likelihood that problem behaviour will occur by:

- identifying settings and events that make the problem behaviour worse (e.g. diet, medical conditions/illness, sleep, fatigue, social conflicts)
- identifying events that precede, trigger or occasion problem behaviour (e.g. task demands, instruction, peer/adult requests);
- identifying outcomes that maintain problem behaviours (e.g. attention, escape/avoidance);
- teaching new social, behavioural and communication skills;
- neutralising or eliminating the conditions that trigger problem behaviours or make them worse or more likely;
- enhancing the living and learning options available to the pupil;
- support the pupil in difficult situations;
- safely manage crises if and when they occur;
- summon additional support if required;

- training needs for staff in implementing the programme.

Restrictive interventions, including physical restraint or seclusion, will only ever form part of a wider behaviour support strategy and remain a strategy of last resort, once all other approaches for de-escalation, diffusion and prevention have been tried, or where there is clear danger or ~~extreme~~ ~~urgency~~. Their use does not remove the statutory requirement to record and report significant incidents, even where their use has been agreed with parents as part of a behaviour support plan.

## **8. USE OF RESTRICTIVE PHYSICAL INTERVENTIONS IN UNFORESEEN AND EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

It is recognised that emergency use of physical interventions may be required when pupils behave in unpredictable ways.

Injuries to staff and pupils are more likely to occur when physical interventions are used in an emergency and for this reason great care should be taken to avoid situations where unplanned physical interventions might be needed.

In an emergency, the use of force is permissible if it is the only way to prevent injury or serious damage to property but even in an emergency, the force used must be reasonable.

Before using physical intervention in an emergency, the member of staff concerned should be confident that the adverse outcomes associated with the intervention (for example, injury or distress) will be less severe than the adverse consequences which would have occurred without the use of a physical intervention.

All emergency uses of force that meet the definition of a significant incident must be recorded and reported in accordance with Section 10 of this policy.

## **9. SECLUSION**

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

Seclusion will only be used as a safety measure where a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation and there is a clear risk of harm to others. It will never be used as a punishment.

Where seclusion is used:

- the space must be safe and non-threatening;
- the pupil must be supervised at all times;
- the pupil must be released as soon as the immediate risk has reduced.

All incidents involving seclusion must be recorded and reported to parents in line with statutory requirements, even where no physical force has been used.

## **10. POST-INCIDENT SUPPORT**

Following a significant incident of physical intervention the teacher or adult responsible should as soon as possible inform a senior member of staff. Arrangements will be made for the pupil and staff to recover. Wherever possible all those involved should be offered a debrief, which is appropriate to their needs (BILD Code of Practice, Section 2.1)

A post incident interview will be conducted to discover exactly what happened and the effects on the participants.

If a pupil or a member of staff has experienced injury or severe distress following the use of a physical intervention, they will receive prompt first aid and medical attention.

## **11. REPORTING AND RECORDING USE OF RESTRICTIVE PHYSICAL INTERVENTIONS**

If it is foreseeable that a child will require some form of physical intervention this will be included on their Zones of Regulation Plan stating:

- a description of behaviour sequences and settings which may require a physical intervention response;
- the results of an assessment to determine any contra indications for use of physical;
- complete the online recording via Sleuth describing the behaviours and the use of physical interventions, which is an online equivalent to a book with numbered and dated pages.

When a physical intervention takes place a full written account of the incident will be made by the member of staff concerned and recorded on a physical intervention form via Sleuth and an incident form, if any injury has occurred.

The report will contain:

- name(s) of pupil(s) concerned, when and where the incident occurred;
- the pupil's identified special educational needs and their SEN status code;
- names of staff or pupils who witnessed the incident;
- the location of the incident;
- details of any known or suspected triggers;
- preventative and de-escalation strategies attempted prior to intervention;
- the reason for using a physical intervention (rather than another strategy)
- the type of physical intervention employed i.e. a description of the specific physical intervention techniques;
- the date and the duration of the physical intervention;
- the pupil's response and the outcome of the incident;
- details of any injury to any person or damage to property;
- details of any post-incident support provided to pupils or staff.

The use of a restrictive physical intervention, whether planned or unplanned (emergency) should always be recorded as soon as practicable and, wherever possible, no later than the same day by the person(s) involved in the incident

The contents of the incident log will be reviewed on a termly basis to:

- monitor pupil's welfare
- monitor staff's performance and identify training needs or outcomes
- contribute to audit and evaluation

## **12. TRAINING**

At Riverside Bridge School training of staff is a vital component in our effort to ensure best practice and safe management of all school situations. Within Riverside Bridge School all staff will be trained in the TeamTeach approach for positive behavioural management which includes physical interventions as one element by our TeamTeach certified trainers and receive a certificate for this.

A rolling programme of training will be delivered by accredited trainers. Priority for training places within the programme will be given to staff working most directly where there is a foreseeable risk that a pupil could behave in such a way as to require restrictive physical intervention.

It is our aim that all staff will receive specific training and skill development on use of some basic techniques. Training and skill development on more advanced holds or methods for restraining and controlling others and avoiding serious personal harm will be arranged on a need to know basis should the needs of any pupils demand such restrictive intervention.

It is our aim that appropriate expertise is available to our pupils who may require physical interventions.

Training will reflect current statutory guidance and will support staff to make proportionate, lawful and welfare-focused decisions under pressure.

## **13. MONITORING USE OF RESTRICTIVE PHYSICAL INTERVENTIONS**

Everyone connected with the school should know of the existence of the policy and feel free to study it in detail if they wish or need to do so. However, not everyone needs to know about specific incidents.

The governing body will receive regular anonymised reports on the use of restrictive interventions and will scrutinise patterns, frequency and any disproportionality relating to pupils with SEND or protected characteristics. This data will be used to inform training, policy review and whole-school improvement planning.

## **14. COMPLAINTS**

We hope that by adopting this policy and keeping parents well informed we avoid the need for complaints. Any disputes that do arise about the use of force by a member of staff will be dealt with in accordance with the Child Protection Procedures, a copy of which is available in school. This could in some circumstances lead to an investigation by police and social services.

Any allegations relating to inappropriate use of force, restraint or seclusion will be managed in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education and the school's safeguarding procedures.

Complaints about this policy should be directed to the head or chair of governors.

## Appendix A

### Statutory Recording and Reporting Requirements (DfE April 2026) Sleuth Incident Recording Compliance Checklist

This appendix sets out the statutory minimum information that must be recorded and reported following any significant incident involving the use of force, restraint or seclusion, in line with Department for Education guidance effective from April 2026.

This appendix forms part of the school's Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy and applies to all recorded incidents on the Sleuth system.

#### 1. Definition of a Significant Incident

A significant incident is any incident where the use of force goes beyond ordinary, appropriate physical contact (such as guiding, comforting or first aid). This includes incidents where physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

All significant incidents must be recorded and reported in accordance with this appendix, even where the use of restrictive interventions has been agreed in advance as part of a behaviour support plan.

#### 2. Statutory Minimum Recording Requirements

For each significant incident involving the use of force, restraint or seclusion, the following information must be recorded on Sleuth as soon as practicable and no later than the same day:

- Pupil and staff details
  - Name of pupil
  - Names of staff directly involved
  - Names of any witnesses
  - Special educational needs status and SEN status code
- Incident details
  - Date and time of incident
  - Location
  - Approximate duration
  - Type of incident:
    - Significant use of force
    - Seclusion
    - Restraint without physical force
- Context and rationale
  - Description of what led up to the incident
  - Identified or potential triggers (if known)
  - Preventative and de-escalation strategies attempted
  - Reason the intervention was assessed as necessary at the time
- Intervention details
  - Type of restrictive intervention used
  - Degree of force applied (where physical force was used)
- Impact and outcome
  - Pupil response and outcome
  - Details of any physical injuries to pupils or staff
  - Damage to property (if applicable)
- Post-incident actions

- First aid or medical treatment provided (if applicable)
- Post-incident debriefs and support offered to pupils and staff
- Any follow-up actions or review required

### **3. Seclusion-Specific Requirements**

Where seclusion is used, the record must additionally confirm:

- that the pupil was supervised at all times;
- the start and end time of the seclusion period;
- the reason seclusion was necessary as a safety measure;
- what actions were taken to support the pupil to return to regulation.

### **4. Reporting to Parents and Carers**

Parents/carers must be informed in writing of any significant incident involving the use of force, restraint or seclusion as soon as practicable and no later than the same day, unless doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil.

The written report to parents must include:

- date, time, location and duration of the incident;
- reason the intervention was necessary;
- type and degree of force used (where applicable);
- details of any injuries sustained.

Where parents cannot be informed due to safeguarding concerns, the incident will be reported to the appropriate local authority in line with statutory guidance.

### **5. Governance and Oversight**

Anonymised data from Sleuth will be reviewed regularly by senior leaders and the governing body to:

- monitor frequency and patterns of restrictive interventions;
- identify training and support needs for staff;
- review the effectiveness of behaviour support plans;
- monitor any disproportionality relating to pupils with SEND or protected characteristics;
- inform policy review and school improvement planning.