



Hall Orchard

C of E Primary School

Growing together, flourishing for life

Use of Reasonable Force and Restrictive Interventions Policy

Adopted:	April 2026
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Governor Approval:	Yes
Publish to Website:	Yes
Owner:	Headteacher

Hall Orchard Barrow CE Primary School (Academy)

Reasonable Force and Restrictive Interventions Policy

1. Purpose and Strategic Context

This policy sets out the legal, ethical and professional framework for the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions within the school.

The school is committed to:

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils
- Protecting the safety and wellbeing of staff
- Minimising the need for restrictive interventions through prevention, early support and de-escalation.

This policy reflects the statutory duties under:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Sections 93 & 93A)
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- DfE guidance 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026)

2. Key Principles

- The use of force is a **last resort**
- Force must never be used as a punishment
- The least restrictive option must always be used
- Interventions must be:
 - Necessary
 - Proportionate
 - Reasonable in the circumstances
- The dignity, wellbeing and rights of the pupil must remain a priority at all times
- The school adopts a preventative, relational and trauma-informed approach

The school **will not operate a 'no contact' policy**, as this could prevent staff from fulfilling their duty of care.

3. Terminology and Definitions

The school uses the following definitions in line with DfE guidance:

Restrictive Interventions* – Any planned or reactive action that limits a pupil's movement, liberty or freedom to act independently. This may include physical, mechanical, chemical or environmental restriction. A 'plain English' definition for a restrictive intervention is one in which a person is prevented from doing what they appear to want to do.

Reasonable Force* – Reasonable Force is a legal test, used to determine if force – usually a physical contact – used by staff to control or restrain a pupil's actions is justifiable by law. Force must be necessary and therefore used for the least amount of time. It must be proportionate to the circumstances it is attempting to prevent or stop.

Restraint* – A form of restrictive intervention involving direct physical contact intended to prevent, restrict or subdue movement.

Seclusion* – The supervised confinement and isolation of a pupil, away from other pupils, in an area from which the pupil is prevented from leaving of their own free will.

*These categories are not mutually exclusive and may overlap depending on the circumstances.

Significant incident – ‘Significant incident’ refers to any incident where the use of reasonable force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff.

Appropriate physical contact – There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to have some physical contact with pupils which does not rise to any question over the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions. This will depend on the circumstance, but examples of occasions when physical contact is generally appropriate including giving first aid, guiding or escorting pupils, comforting a distressed pupil, congratulating or praising a pupil (e.g. a pat on the back or a handshake), demonstrating how to use a musical instrument, and demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching.

In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in a given situation, the member of staff should use their judgement, have regard to the school’s child protection (or any other relevant) policy, the applicable circumstances (including whether there are other adults present), the individual pupil’s age, and any other material factors. This includes, but is not limited to, whether the pupil has SEND or other vulnerabilities, and whether any alternative strategies which do not include physical contact can be used.

Risk Assessment – A risk assessment is a suitable and sufficient process for identifying hazards and judging the level of risk by weighing:

- Frequency (likelihood): How often the harmful event could happen, given the context and triggers.
- Severity (impact): How serious the harm could be if it happens, for everyone affected.

It then records the controls needed to reduce the risk to a level that is reasonably practicable, balancing the level of risk against the time, effort and resources required to reduce it. Carrying out risk assessments is a duty under Health and Safety management regulations.

4. Prevention and De-escalation (Core Approach)

The school prioritises preventing situations that may lead to the use of force.

The school promotes a positive behavior culture built on clear expectations that are explicitly taught, consistently reinforced and applied fairly. This includes shared language for behavior, predictable routines and proportionate responses that support learning and help pupils understand what good order and discipline look like in practice.

The school also maintains safe, supportive learning environments that reduce unnecessary stressors and help pupils regulate and engage. This includes thoughtful classroom and corridor expectations, supervision in higher-risk spaces and proactive adjustments for pupils who may be more vulnerable to distress, sensory overload, or anxiety.

Staff are trained and supported to use prevention and de-escalation as the default approach.

Training focuses on de-escalation skills, effective communication strategies and practical ways to support emotional regulation, so that staff can recognise early warning signs, respond calmly and reduce the likelihood that situations escalate.

Strong staff-pupil relationships are treated as a core protective factor. Staff are expected to build trust through consistent, respectful interactions, to repair relationships after incidents, and to use relational approaches that preserve dignity, particularly when a pupil is distressed.

The school maintains consistent behaviour systems so that pupils experience predictable boundaries and staff responses are aligned across teams. Finally, the school regularly reviews incident and behaviour data to identify patterns, triggers and any disproportionality. Learning from this data is used to improve practice, target training and strengthen preventative planning.

De-escalation Strategies

Staff will, wherever possible:

- Treat others with dignity by showing them respect in their communication
- Be sensitive to behaviour triggers and environmental stressors
- Adjust tone, body language and proximity
- Listen with empathy
- Offer choices and time to process
- Redirect attention
- Distraction
- Use of humour
- Sensory break
- Seek support from colleagues

5. Legal Powers

Under **Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006**, all school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force.

This includes:

- Teachers and support staff
- Any person authorised by the Headteacher

The school does not accept requests by parents or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions.

6. When Force May Be Used

Force may only be used to prevent a pupil from:

- Causing injury to themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence
- Damaging property
- Seriously disrupting good order and discipline

7. The 'Reasonableness' Test

Staff must apply professional judgement using the following framework:

Necessity:

- Is there an imminent risk of harm?
- Can the situation be verbally de-escalated?
- Can the team wait or withdraw from the situation?
- Are there any other viable options rather than the use of force?

Proportionality:

- A proportionate amount of force prevents a greater harm from occurring.

Welfare and Dignity:

When making decisions about any physical contact, staff must actively consider the pupil's welfare and dignity throughout the incident. This means taking account of the pupil's age and size, any medical needs, any special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND); and any known history of trauma, distress, or vulnerability that may affect how the pupil experiences the intervention.

Staff must also consider the pupil's communication needs. Where a pupil has speech, language and communication needs, is non-verbal or has English as an additional language, staff should use clear, calm language and appropriate non-verbal strategies, allowing time for the pupil to process what is being communicated.

Where possible, staff should seek to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity. This may include, where possible, considering the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers. Staff should explain what is happening and why, using simple, respectful language and should continuously monitor the pupil's wellbeing so that the level of intervention can be reduced or stopped as soon as it is safe to do so.

8. Considerations for Pupils with SEND

The school recognises that pupils with SEND may be disproportionality affected.

The school will identify individual triggers that can increase the likelihood of distress or escalation, including sensory overload, anxiety and pain, and will respond by putting proactive and preventative strategies in place. Where a pupil may be more vulnerable, the school will work in partnership with parents, the pupil and relevant professionals to agree supportive approaches and clear planning. The school will also ensure that reasonable adjustments are identified, implemented and reviewed so that the pupil can be supported effectively and the need for restrictive intervention is reduced wherever possible.

Behaviour Support Plans

Where risk is identified, plans will include:

- Triggers and early warning signs
- De-escalation strategies
- Agreed responses
- Any agreed physical intervention (if applicable)

Plans will be reviewed:

- Regularly
- After any significant incident

9. Training and Risk Assessment

The school will:

- Ensure staff likely to use force are adequately trained in the safe and lawful use of restrictive interventions and in preventative strategies
- Ensure training reflects the principles set out in DfE guidance, including prevention, de-escalation and the safe and lawful use of force
- Carry out risk assessments where there is foreseeable risk of intervention
- Ensure staff understand:
 - Safe practice
 - Legal boundaries
 - De-escalation techniques

10. Prohibited Practices and Risk Management

Prohibited Practices and Safety Requirements

Staff must never:

- Use force as a punishment
- Use any technique that restricts breathing or circulation
- Cover the mouth or nose
- Apply pressure to the neck, chest, abdomen or rib cage

High-risk positions

- Prone restraint (face-down) is prohibited
- Ground restraint must be avoided wherever possible

If a pupil is unintentionally in contact on the ground, staff must

- Release or reposition immediately to a safer position (e.g. seated or standing)
- Continuously assess the pupil's condition

Risk Awareness (Breathing and Circulation)

Staff must be aware of the risks associated with restraint, including those relating to breathing and circulation (sometimes referred to as positional asphyxia).

Staff must:

- Monitor the pupil continuously
- Look for signs of distress (e.g. breathing difficulty, collapse, panic)
- Act immediately to reduce or stop the intervention if risk is identified. Staff must continuously assess the situation and reduce and cease the intervention as soon as it is safe to do so.

11. Use of Force for Searching

Force may be used to search a pupil, or their possessions, for prohibited items only where there are reasonable grounds to suspect the pupil has such an item. The power applies to the headteacher and to staff members they have authorised to carry out searches. Staff must not use force to search for items that are banned under school rules (for example mobile phones or non-uniform items). Where a search is required, staff should follow the school's safeguarding procedures and have regard to the relevant DfE guidance on searching, screening and confiscation.

12. Recording of Incidents (Statutory Requirement)

All significant incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable (the same day where possible) after the event by the staff member(s) involved. The requirement to record applies even if the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour plan. Staff must record the incident on CPOMS, completing the relevant form.

Records will include:

- Names of pupils and staff directly involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil has an identified special educational need or disability and the SEN status code (Pupil overview page in CPOMS)
- Time, date, location and approximate length of time the intervention was used
- A brief account of the incident, including what led up to it; identified potential triggers (if known), and any preventative or de-escalation strategies used; what type of reasonable force was applied; the degree of force; and details of any physical injuries sustained (if applicable).
- A brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance
- Any post-incident support, including details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts.

The school may also record additional details to support evaluation and learning, for example the pupil's and/or witnesses' accounts, when and how parents were notified and what follow-up has taken place. As a matter of best practice, the school will also record non-force restrictive interventions where a pupil's freedom of movement or liberty is restricted beyond ordinary classroom management, in order to support monitoring, safeguarding and preventative practice.

13. Reporting to Parents (Statutory Requirement)

Parents will be informed as soon as practicable, unless doing so would risk significant harm to the pupil.

Parents will be informed in writing via School Comms and reports will include:

- Time, date, location and duration
- Type of force used
- Any injuries
- Reason for use

The requirement to report to parents applies even when the use of reasonable force is anticipated or agreed as part of a behaviour plan. Where reporting to parents is not appropriate, the incident will be reported to the relevant agency e.g. allocated social worker.

14. Post-Incident Support and Review

Following any significant incident, the school will take prompt action to support the wellbeing of the pupil,

and any staff involved, and to reduce the likelihood of recurrence. The purpose of the post-incident process is to ensure any immediate health needs are met, that recording and reporting duties are fulfilled, and that the school learns from what happened in a way that protects dignity, rebuilds relationships and strengthens preventative practice.

As soon as practicable after the incident, staff must consider whether the pupil or any member of staff requires a medical assessment or treatment for an injury. Any injuries must be recorded in line with the school's procedures and escalated where required.

Support will be offered to the pupil and/or staff, and where appropriate, to witnesses who may have been distressed by what they saw or heard. The support will be proportionate to need and may include reassurance, time and space to regulate, and follow-up conversations as well as access to additional pastoral or wellbeing support where required.

A debriefing process will be completed to support reflection and learning. This should include separate opportunities for the staff member(s) involved and the pupil to share their reflections. Where possible, the debrief should be facilitated by a member of staff who was not directly involved in the incident. The debrief should focus on understanding what happened, what contributed to escalation, what helped and what could be done differently in future. A specific aim of the process is to repair and rebuild relationships through respectful dialogue.

Following the debrief, the school will review any relevant behaviour plan or other planning documents. The review will identify preventative improvements, including adjustments to support strategies, environments, staffing approaches, communication plans or risk management measures, and will ensure these changes are communicated to the relevant staff.

15. Monitoring and Governance

The school will:

- Regularly review incident data to:
 - Identify patterns
 - Improve practice
 - Identify training needs
 - Monitor disproportionality
- Ensure compliance with statutory duties

The headteacher will provide Governors with termly data for review.

16. Complaints and Allegations

Any concerns or complaints will be handled in line with:

- The school's complaints procedure
- Keeping children Safe in Education (KCSIE)

Allegations against staff will be managed in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

17. Related Policies

- Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- SEND Policy
- Equality Information and Objectives Statement

Appendix 1



Positive Behaviour Support Plan and Risk Assessment

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Child's name		Date of birth		Class	
Additional information					
Support strategies/Proactive interventions to prevent risks <i>Things to do or say to stay in the green zone including interventions/resources.</i>			Behaviour <i>Actions, what may be said or done that gives a clue the child is calm and relaxed.</i>		
Support strategies/Early interventions to manage risks <i>Things to do or say to stop the situation from escalating further and return the child to the proactive stage as soon as possible.</i>			Behaviour <i>Actions, what may be said or done that gives a clue the child is becoming anxious or frustrated.</i>		
Support strategies/Reactive interventions to respond to adverse outcomes <i>Things to do or say quickly to manage the situation and to prevent unnecessary distress, injury and destruction.</i>			Behaviour <i>Actions, what may be said or done that gives a clue the child is angry or challenging.</i>		
Identified high risks that may result in restrictive interventions					
Behaviour		Risk		Further action (beyond reactive interventions)	Severity
Support strategies/Proactive Interventions to prevent risks <i>Things to do or say to support the child to become more calm and return to the proactive phrase.</i>			Behaviour <i>Actions, what may be said or done that gives a clue the child is becoming more calm.</i>		

Date		Review date	
Head teacher Mr Dunn		Date	
Pastoral Lead Mrs Harrison		Date	
SENCO Mrs Kneafsey		Date	
Class teacher		Date	
Parent/carer		Date	

SEVERITY (S) X LIKELIHOOD (L) – RISK RATING (RR)

The risk rating based on existing situation, including control measures present at the time of assessment can be evaluated as follows:

Potential Severity of Harm (S)

Likelihood of harm (L)		1	2	3	4	Risk Rating (S) x (L) =	
	1	1	2	3	4	1 - 4	Low
2	2	4	6	8	4 - 7	Medium	
3	3	6	9	12	8 - 16	High	
4	4	8	12	16			