



Restrictive Interventions and Use of Reasonable Force Policy

Written by:	Aimee Tinkler
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Our Children Thrive - Our Colleagues Thrive - Our Community Thrives

Purpose and statutory context

This policy sets out Odyssey Collaborative Trust's approach to the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, restraint and seclusion, across all Trust schools and settings.

The policy has been developed in accordance with, and explicitly informed by, the Department for Education's statutory and non-statutory guidance: Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (DfE, April 2026)

The Trust recognises that restrictive interventions can have a significant physical and psychological impact on children, staff and families. While there are circumstances in which their use may be lawful and necessary to prevent harm, restrictive interventions must always be regarded as a last resort and used only when they are necessary, proportionate and lawful, and when less restrictive measures have been attempted or assessed as inappropriate in the circumstances.

This policy must be implemented consistently with wider safeguarding, equality, human rights and health and safety duties.

1. Legal framework

This policy reflects the following legislation and guidance:

- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (DfE, 2026)
- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (sections 93 and 93A)
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition)

Where this policy uses the word must, this indicates a legal requirement. Where it uses should, this indicates expected practice unless there is a clearly justified reason not to follow it.

2. Principles underpinning practice

Restrictive interventions must:

- be used only in exceptional circumstances
- be based on professional judgement
- be necessary to prevent serious harm
- be proportionate to the risk
- use the least restrictive option
- involve the minimum amount of force
- last for the shortest possible time

- cease as soon as the immediate risk has reduced

The welfare, dignity and rights of the child must remain central at all times.

Restrictive interventions must never be used:

- as a punishment or sanction
- to enforce compliance
- for convenience
- as part of a planned behaviour management strategy
- where there is no immediate risk of harm

Good professional relationships between staff and children are vital to ensure a positive and productive learning environment. The purpose of any use of physical intervention in our schools is to ensure that all children and adults are safe and supported. We aim to support children to learn to regulate their own emotions and behaviour, while also ensuring that the children know that staff will always support them to stay safe and to calm down when needed. All staff act in the best interests of the child when using physical interventions.

3. Who can use reasonable force

All members of school staff have a statutory power to use reasonable force under section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

This power applies:

- when staff are lawfully in charge of pupils
- on and off site, including educational visits
- irrespective of whether a pupil has SEND

The existence of this legal power does not remove the requirement for professional judgement, training, or adherence to this policy.

4. Prevention and de-escalation

The Trust expects all schools to prioritise prevention and early intervention by:

- establishing clear routines and expectations
- using positive behaviour support approaches
- adapting environments and sensory factors
- identifying known triggers and early warning signs
- using trauma-informed and relational practice
- applying effective verbal and non-verbal communication
- building strong relationships between staff and pupils

Individual support may include behaviour support plans, individual risk assessments, reasonable adjustments, sensory strategies and joint work with parents and external professionals.

5. Staff training and support

Staff who may be required to use restrictive interventions must receive appropriate training, including:

- prevention and de-escalation strategies
- safe and lawful use of reasonable force
- assessing necessity and proportionality
- understanding SEND, trauma and vulnerability
- recognising physical and psychological risk
- making defensible professional judgements, including under pressure

Training requirements must be informed by:

- pupil needs
- incident data and trends
- risk assessments

Each school, under the leadership of the Headteacher, will take reasonably practicable steps to support staff health, safety and wellbeing, including ensuring access to appropriate training, refresher training where required, and advice and support.

6. When restrictive intervention may be used

Restrictive interventions may only be used to prevent a pupil from:

- causing injury to themselves or others
- committing a criminal offence
- causing serious damage to property
- causing significant disorder

The decision to use a restrictive intervention is a matter of professional judgement and must be based on the specific circumstances at the time.

7. Unacceptable practice

The following practices are strictly prohibited:

- restricting or interfering with a pupil's airway, breathing or circulation
- pressure to the neck, throat, chest or abdomen
- covering the mouth or nose
- deliberate or prolonged ground restraint
- humiliating, degrading, threatening or intimidating actions

Any restrictive intervention that presents, or begins to present, a medical risk must stop immediately. Medical assessment and treatment must be sought where required.

Any concern that unacceptable practice has occurred must be reported immediately in line with safeguarding and allegations procedures.

8. Appropriate physical contact

Appropriate physical contact (for example, first aid, comfort, guiding, PE instruction, moving and handling) is lawful and often necessary.

Staff must exercise professional judgement, taking account of safeguarding context, pupil age, vulnerability, SEND and alternative strategies.

Physical touch is a part of human relationship. In our Odyssey schools, we use touch to prompt, to give reassurance or to provide support; this is used sensitively and appropriately. We understand that some children prefer not to be touched and this will be respected.

9. Consideration for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

Some children and young people with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Triggers may include pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar situations or environments or feelings of fear and anxiety. In particular, pupils who are non-verbal or find verbal communication challenging may express their needs, discomfort or confusion through actions.

Our schools seek to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour so that they can provide proactive support, create an inclusive environment and consider the impact of school policies on pupils with SEND.

Our schools 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. They also work with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

Depending on the circumstances, examples of strategies may include:

- removing stimuli that may be causing distress or moving to a different or safer environment
- changing body language, facial expression, and/or tone of voice
- supporting the pupil to express their emotions before getting overwhelmed, including validating emotions and offering physical and emotional comfort
- engaging the pupil in an activity which can help them manage and communicate their feelings in a socially appropriate and safe way
- distracting the pupil in something that interests them or by introducing familiar objects and activities to redirect their attention

Where appropriate, school staff should work with pupils with SEND and their parents in the co-production of any necessary behaviour support plans. Behaviour support plans should outline any reasonable adjustments required to meet the needs of the child.

Behaviour support plans should detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil. This should be discussed in conjunction with the relevant people, such as teachers, parents, the pupil, pastoral staff or health professionals, and parameters around its use stated clearly in the plan. Where there is an identified risk, such as increased likelihood

in the need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions, schools must have risk assessments in place and where possible, mitigate risks such as through training and prevention strategies. Whether the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate will depend on the circumstances, irrespective of whether it has been considered as part of a behaviour support plan.

Any behaviour support plans should be reviewed with the pupil and their parent periodically and following any significant incident, so that changes can be made based on evidence of what has worked and what has not worked in practice for the individual pupil.

10. Searching pupils and reasonable force

Reasonable force may be used to search pupils only for prohibited items where statutory powers apply ([See DfE Searching, screening and confiscation guidance for schools, July 2022](#)).

Reasonable force must not be used to search for items banned only under school rules.

Any use of force during a search constitutes a restrictive intervention and must be managed, recorded and reported in line with this policy.

11. Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary, short-term safety measure and may only be used where a pupil is experiencing significant emotional or behavioural dysregulation and there is an immediate and serious risk of harm.

Seclusion:

- must never be used as punishment, sanction or compliance
- must not be used to threaten or coerce
- must occur in a safe, suitable and non-threatening environment
- must involve continuous supervision
- must end as soon as the immediate risk has reduced

All incidents of seclusion are significant safeguarding events and must be recorded and reported in line with statutory duties.

12. Recording and reporting

Appropriate physical contact, such as guiding, comforting, first aid or moving and handling, does not constitute a restrictive intervention and does not require recording under this section.

Any restrictive physical intervention or use of force that goes beyond appropriate physical contact constitutes a serious incident for the purposes of recording, reporting and safeguarding oversight and must be recorded in line with this policy.

Record of Restrictive Physical Intervention – Part 1

For all restrictive physical interventions beyond appropriate physical contact, staff must complete a Record of Restrictive Physical Intervention – Part 1.

Part 1 must be:

- completed as soon as practicably possible;
- completed no later than the same day;
- uploaded to CPOMS using the Trust's approved form (see Appendix 1).

Records must provide a clear, factual account and include:

- the names of the pupil and staff involved;
- the date, time, location and duration of the incident;
- known context, triggers and behaviours that led to the intervention;
- de-escalation or preventative strategies attempted prior to the use of force;
- the nature, type and degree of force used;
- the rationale for why the use of force was assessed as necessary and proportionate at the time;
- details of any distress, welfare concerns or risks identified;
- details of post-incident support provided;
- confirmation of parental communication.

Record of Restrictive Physical Intervention – Part 2 (To be used where an injury has occurred)

Where any pupil or member of staff sustains an injury during a restrictive physical intervention, a Record of Restrictive Physical Intervention – Part 2 must also be completed in addition to Part 1.

This requirement applies regardless of the perceived severity of the injury and is in addition to the completion of any accident or injury reporting required under health and safety procedures.

Part 2 provides enhanced detail relating to:

- injury or physical impact;
- escalation, intensity or duration;
- risk management during the incident;
- safeguarding, learning and preventative actions.

13. Parental communication

Parents must be contacted by telephone or in person as soon as practicable following any restrictive intervention or physical intervention. Every effort should be made to ensure this communication takes place before any written notification is sent home, wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so.

The purpose of this contact is to inform parents that an intervention has occurred, outline the immediate circumstances, and provide reassurance about the child's welfare. Any attempts to contact parents must be recorded.

Parents must then be informed in writing of each significant incident, unless a statutory exception applies (where informing parents would be likely to result in serious harm to the child). See example email in Appendix 2.

Written communication to parents must include, as a minimum:

- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
- brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force
- details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable

The requirement to report applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

Communication with parents must be accurate, factual and non-judgemental and should be provided as soon as practicable after the incident, with an expectation that this will take place no later than the same day.

14. Safeguarding requirements

All incidents involving restrictive intervention or physical intervention constitute significant safeguarding information and must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) without delay. Where the Headteacher is not the DSL, the incident must also be reported directly to the Headteacher.

Prompt reporting ensures appropriate safeguarding oversight, timely support for pupils and staff, and consistent application of this policy across schools.

15. Post-incident actions

Following any restrictive intervention, schools must ensure:

- immediate welfare and medical checks
- consideration of health and safety reporting requirements
- emotional support for pupils and staff
- reflective debrief and professional learning
- review of behaviour support plans, risk assessments and reasonable adjustments
- restorative work where appropriate to rebuild relationships

16. Headteacher responsibility for recording, monitoring and prevention

The Headteacher has overall responsibility at school level for ensuring that:

- all incidents involving restrictive intervention or physical intervention are accurately, promptly and fully recorded in line with this policy and statutory requirements;
- records are reviewed to ensure that practice remains lawful, proportionate and appropriate;
- incidents are analysed for patterns, frequency and disproportionality, including consideration of pupils with SEND or other identified vulnerabilities;
- appropriate reflective discussions and debriefs take place with staff following incidents;
- proactive steps are taken to reduce the likelihood of recurrence and to prevent reliance on restrictive interventions wherever possible.

The Headteacher must ensure that any safeguarding concerns arising from restrictive interventions are escalated appropriately and that learning is shared within the school and, where relevant, with the Trust to support continuous improvement and prevention.

17. Monitoring and governance

On a termly basis, the local governing board of each school will:

- monitor patterns and frequency of restrictive interventions
- review data for disproportionality
- use learning from incidents to reduce reliance on restrictive practice

The trustee's education committee will look at the above for all schools and receive a report from The Director of Education on the following:

- assure statutory compliance
- ensure staff training and support

18. Complaints and allegations

Complaints relating to restrictive interventions will be managed under the Trust's Complaints Policy.

Allegations against staff will be managed in line with:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Allegations Against Staff and Low-Level Concerns Procedures
- Staff disciplinary processes

Interventions Glossary of Terms

In line with - Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools Guidance (2026)

RPI: Restrictive Physical Intervention

Restrictive intervention: a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This guidance uses 'restrictive interventions' as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways.

Reasonable force: a term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

Significant incident: any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff. This includes when 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 either by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave.

Restraint: a term used in legislation referring to a non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact. For example, holding a pupil's arms to their sides or removing a pupil's crutches would both be considered forms of restraint. The various restrictive interventions above have been defined for completeness and should not be construed as an endorsement or otherwise for their use in schools. Some will not be relevant to most schools.

Appendix 1 – Recording Restrictive Interventions



Record of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) – Part 1

This form must be completed in full. Where a behaviour support plan, risk assessment, de-escalation plan or other agreed support plan is in place, records must clearly describe how the plan was followed in practice and, where relevant, explain why any elements could not be implemented at the time.

Date and time of the RPI		
Location		
Name of Pupil		
Staff member/s		
Other Staff Present		
Details of any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil has an identified SEND, their SEN status code, other support plans etc.		
Brief account of what led up to the incident, identified or potential triggers and any preventative or de-escalation strategies which were used.		
Details of the intervention what type of reasonable force was applied including the degree and duration of force used:		
Details of what happened immediately after the intervention (post incident actions):		
Reflective actions taken following the incident, including changes to support plans and provision where required.		
Parental Notification	Date and time:	Person who informed parents:
Have parents been informed verbally?		
Have parents been informed in writing?		
Was anyone hurt?	Yes - Please also fill out part 2 of this form	No
To be completed by the headteacher or designated SLT: Was this use of restrictive physical intervention proportional, supportive and in line with School and Trust Policy?		

Are any environmental, strategic or support changes required to reduce the likelihood of recurrence?	
Headteacher / Designated SLT Name: Signed:	Signed (staff member/s who used positive handling):

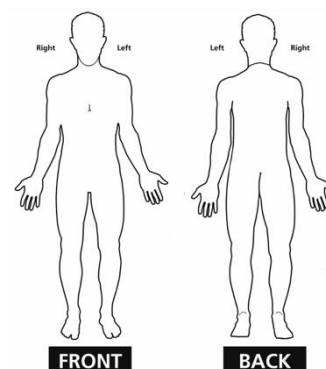


Record of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) – Part 2
To be used where an injury has occurred

Injury to a pupil

Has an accident form been completed? Yes / No

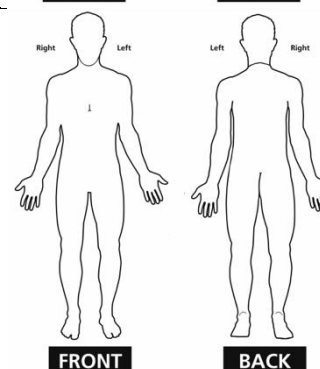
Details of injuries and any medical treatment provided:



Injury to a member of staff

Has an injury form been completed? Yes / No

Details of injuries and any medical treatment provided:



What actions will be taken to reduce the likelihood of this incident occurring again?

Headteacher / other designated SLT: Name: Signed:	Signed (staff member/s who used positive handling):
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Appendix 2a – Example Email to Parents Following Physical Intervention

Please note this an example of communication schools may like to use with parents and leaders should consider how best to communicate with their school community. The requirements of what should be included in the policy are outlined in the trust policy.

Subject: Notification of physical intervention involving [Pupil name]

Dear [Parent or carer name],

I am writing to inform you about an incident involving [Pupil name] that took place at school today, [date], in line with our statutory duty to record and report incidents of physical interventions.

At approximately [time], in [location], a situation arose in which staff needed to intervene to support safety and reduce the risk of harm. The staff member(s) involved were [name(s) and role(s)].

The restraint was used solely as a de-escalatory measure and was necessary at that time to prevent harm and maintain safety. It was proportionate, used for the minimum time required and was not used as a punishment or sanction.

Brief description of what happened:

[Short, factual account of the events leading up to the restraint, written neutrally]

Nature and duration of the restraint:

[Brief description, including whether physical contact was involved and approximate duration]

Pupil wellbeing:

[Details of any injuries, or confirmation that no injuries were sustained, and any medical checks or treatment if applicable]

Following the incident, [Pupil name] was supported through [brief description of post-incident support]. Staff will reflect on the incident and review support arrangements where appropriate to reduce the likelihood of similar situations arising.

If you would like to discuss this further or have any questions, please contact [name and role] at school.

Kind regards,

[Name]

[Role]

[School]