Use of Reasonable Force and Restrictive Interventions

Trust Policy & Procedures

Accountable Trust Committee	Education Committee
Policy Area	Pastoral
Responsible Officer	Holly Wise
Status	Head of Education
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Key Contacts

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Please note this list may be updated by the responsible officer when change arises in the organisation, without the need for committee meeting review/approval.

1 Introduction / Policy Statement

This policy now reflects the statutory framework for restrictive interventions, including enhanced recording, oversight and safeguarding duties.

This policy sets out the Trust's approach to the use of reasonable force and restrictive interventions in schools, in line with statutory guidance on Restrictive Interventions, including the Use of Reasonable Force in Schools (effective April 2026) and existing legislation.

The purpose is to:

- safeguard pupils and staff
- promote de-escalation and prevention
- ensure restrictive intervention is only used when absolutely necessary
- ensure consistency across the Trust
- meet statutory recording, reporting and oversight requirements

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and authorised adults working with pupils across the Trust.

2. Legal Framework

This policy is informed by and should be read alongside:

Education and Inspections Act 2006 (s93)

Equality Act 2010

Children Act 1989 and 2004

Keeping Children Safe in Education (current)

Searching, Screening and Confiscation (DfE)

Statutory Guidance: Restrictive Interventions, including Use of Reasonable Force in Schools (April 2026)

Trust Behaviour, SEND, Safeguarding and Safer Working Practice policies

Reasonable force does not include corporal punishment.

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3. Definitions

Definitions reflect the statutory terminology introduced in April 2026, including restrictive intervention and seclusion.

Reasonable force: Physical contact used proportionately and as a last resort to prevent harm, damage or serious disorder.

Restrictive intervention: Any action that limits a pupil's movement, liberty or access to the environment, including physical, mechanical, environmental or chemical restriction (schools do not use chemical restraint).

Physical restrictive intervention: Direct physical contact to prevent movement or guide a pupil away from danger.

Seclusion: Isolating a pupil in a room they cannot leave. This is not permitted within the Trust.

De-escalation: Strategies used to reduce agitation and avoid the need for restrictive intervention.

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4. Principles

Practice must meet the legal tests of necessity, proportionality, dignity and time limitation set out in the 2026 guidance.

The Trust adopts the following principles:

- Restrictive intervention is a last resort.
- It must be lawful, proportionate, necessary and time-limited.
- The pupil's dignity, safety and wellbeing must be central.
- Intervention must never be used as punishment or for compliance alone.
- Staff must use the least intrusive option available.
- Practice must be trauma informed and inclusive.
- Repeated use triggers safeguarding review.

5. Prevention and De escalation

All schools must prioritise prevention. Strategies include:

- predictable routines and safe environments
- calm, respectful communication
- emotional regulation support
- active listening and validation
- offering choices and exit routes
- time and space to calm
- restorative and relational approaches
- individual behaviour and risk plans for identified pupils

Staff should avoid confrontation, humiliation, crowding, or power struggles which may escalate situations.

6. Authorisation and Training

Planned physical restraint may only be used by trained staff and must align with statutory expectations on authorisation and refreshers.

All paid staff have a statutory power to use reasonable force. However:

Only staff trained in approved restrictive intervention techniques may use planned physical restraint.

The Trust approves recognised training approaches (e.g. Team Teach, MAPA or equivalent).

Untrained staff may intervene only to prevent serious and immediate harm and must use the minimum force necessary.

Headteachers must:

- maintain a register of trained staff
- ensure refresher training
- ensure temporary staff and volunteers understand boundaries
- ensure pupils with known risk have individual support plans

7. When Restrictive Intervention May Be Used

Intervention thresholds now reflect the statutory risk balancing test introduced in April 2026.

Restrictive intervention may be used to prevent a pupil from:

- committing a criminal offence
- causing injury to themselves or others
- causing serious damage to property
- seriously prejudicing good order and safety

It must only be used where other strategies have failed or are not possible and where the risk of not intervening outweighs the risk of intervening.

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8. What Is Not Permitted

Prohibited practices reflect national bans within the statutory guidance (including seclusion and prone restraint).

Staff must not:

- use force as punishment
- use pain inducing techniques
- restrict breathing or apply pressure to neck, chest or abdomen
- force pupils face down on the floor
- use seclusion or locked rooms
- use mechanical restraints
- use intervention for convenience or compliance

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9. SEND, Equality and Trauma Informed Practice

Enhanced protections apply to pupils with SEND and vulnerable learners, including safeguarding review for repeated intervention.

Under the Equality Act 2010, schools must make reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND.

For pupils at risk of restrictive intervention:

- individual risk assessments must be in place
- behaviour support plans must include de-escalation strategies
- staff must understand triggers and communication needs
- families should be involved where appropriate
- repeated incidents must trigger safeguarding review
- Intervention should avoid re traumatisation and respect the pupil's lived experience

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10. Searching and Screening

Searching must follow DfE guidance on Searching, Screening and Confiscation.

Key principles:

- searches should normally be conducted by same sex staff
- a witness should be present
- reasonable force may be used only to prevent harm
- pupils' dignity and privacy must be protected
- all searches involving force must be recorded on CPOMS

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11. Recording and Statutory Reporting

Recording and reporting below include new mandatory legal duties from April 2026.

All restrictive interventions must be recorded on CPOMS as soon as practicable and within 24 hours.

Records must include:

- pupil details
- date, time and location
- staff involved and witnesses
- antecedents and triggers
- de-escalation attempted
- type and duration of intervention
- injuries or distress
- medical attention provided
- parent communication
- follow up actions.

The Trust must:

- maintain a central register of restrictive interventions
- monitor frequency, patterns and disproportionality
- report termly to the Trust Safeguarding Committee

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12. Parent and Pupil Communication

Parents/carers must be informed of any restrictive intervention as soon as reasonably practicable and normally the same day.

Pupils must be supported to:

- understand what happened
- have their voice heard
- repair relationships

13. Post Incident Review and Support

After any significant incident schools must:

- provide medical and emotional support
- hold a restorative conversation with the pupil
- review risk assessments and plans
- consider multi agency involvement
- support staff wellbeing and reflection
- identify learning for future practice
- Repeated use must trigger a safeguarding and SEND review

14. Complaints and Allegations

Concerns about restrictive intervention should follow the Trust Complaints Policy.

Where concerns relate to staff conduct:

- LADO procedures must be followed where required
- Pupils and families must be supported throughout investigations

15. Trust Oversight and Governance

Trust level monitoring, disproportionality analysis and trustee reporting are statutory expectations from April 2026.

The Trust will:

- quality assure recording across schools
- monitor trends and disproportionality
- audit compliance
- report to trustees
- review policy annually