



Restrictive Interventions Policy

(including Use of Reasonable Force)

Person responsible	DSL
Last update	April 2026
Frequency of Review	Annual
Date of last review by Governors	June 2026
Date of next review by Governors	November 2026

Contents

- 1. Introduction and Aims**
- 2. Scope and Responsibilities**
- 3. The Legal Framework**
- 4. Definitions**
- 5. Avoiding the Need to Use Force**
- 6. Reasonable Force**
- 7. When Might it be Appropriate to Use Reasonable Force?**
- 8. Intervention**
- 9. Factors to be Taken into Account**
- 10. Seclusion**
- 11. Reporting and Recording Incidents**
- 12. Complaints**
- 13. Record Keeping**
- 14. Monitoring and Review**

1. Introduction and Aims

There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in schools to use restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, to safeguard children. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children. 'Reasonable force' in these circumstances means 'using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances' (DfE Guidance, April 2026).

All members of School staff have a legal power to use reasonable force. This power applies to any member of staff at Bute House Preparatory School (the School).

The power to use reasonable force applies whether pupils are on School premises or elsewhere, as long as they (the pupils) are in the lawful control or charge of a staff member. This includes during School-organised visits.

The aims of this Policy are:

- To support the School in establishing a calm, safe and supportive environment that is conducive to learning
- To form part of the School's whole-school approach to safeguarding and behaviour, as set out in KCSIE
- To protect every person in the School community from harm
- To protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention that is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful
- To provide adequate information and training for staff so that they are clear as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour and to deal effectively with violent or potentially violent situations
- To proactively minimise the need to use restrictive interventions through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies

2. Scope and Responsibilities

This Policy applies equally to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 as taught at the School.

3. The Legal Framework

This Policy has been written taking into account the following documents:

- DfE: Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (published December 2025, in force 1 April 2026)

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, sections 93 and 93A
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- DfE Behaviour in Schools (February 2024)

4. Definitions

The following definitions apply throughout this Policy:

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 at restraining 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 is the threshold that triggers the statutory duty to record and report to parents under s.93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

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 include holding or binding the pupil's body or part of it, securing the pupil to a fixed or heavy object, or depriving the pupil of an auxiliary aid that they usually use to help them move.

5. Avoiding the Need to Use Force

Staff at the School recognise that the use of reasonable force is only one of the last in a range of strategies available to secure pupils' safety and wellbeing and to maintain good order and discipline. This Policy should therefore be read in conjunction with the Positive Behaviour and Safeguarding Policies.

- Staff should take steps in advance to avoid the need for physical restraint, e.g. through dialogue, distraction and diversion, allowing space, talking, listening and humouring, cajoling and reasoning. Additionally, the pupil should be verbally warned that physical restraint will be used unless they desist.
- Only the MINIMUM REASONABLE FORCE NECESSARY to prevent physical injury or damage should be applied.
- Every effort should be made to secure the presence of other staff before applying restraint. These staff can act as assistants and witnesses.
- As soon as it is safe, restraint should be gradually relaxed to allow the pupil to regain self-control. Restraint should take place calmly but firmly.
- Restraint should be an act of care and control, not punishment.
- Physical restraint should not be used purely to force compliance with staff instructions when there is no immediate risk to people or property.
- Staff should never give the impression that they have lost their temper but should retain a calm and measured approach.
- Staff should never intervene if they believe they are at risk of injury and instead should call for assistance.

The School does not operate a 'no-contact' policy. The School will not grant requests from parents or staff members that reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions should never be used with a particular pupil. The adoption of a no-contact policy would leave staff unable to intervene where reasonable in the circumstances to protect pupils.

6. Reasonable Force

Restraint will only be used as a last resort after all efforts to defuse the situation have been exhausted. When using physical restraint relevant considerations should be:

- The use of physical restraint can be regarded as reasonable **only** if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it. If the situation does not warrant the use of physical restraint, then **any** degree of force is unlawful.
- The degree of restraint employed must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behavior or the consequences it is intended to prevent. Any restraint used should always be the **minimum required**.
- The degree of restraint used, or whether it is reasonable to use any at all, will also be dependent upon the age of the pupil.

When determining whether to use a restrictive intervention, staff must apply the following three-part assessment:

Is it necessary?

- Consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage the situation.
- Assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks, or whether it would escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself.
- Where possible, communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.

Is it proportionate?

- Use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce the relevant risks.
- If the intervention is escalating the situation, reconsider and attempt an alternative strategy.
- Consider the personal circumstances of the pupil: medical conditions, SEND, age, size, and all relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.

Have you considered the pupil's welfare?

- Consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, including whether the pupil has experienced trauma, has diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions, communication difficulties, or other vulnerabilities.
- Seek to maintain respect for the pupil's dignity, including where possible considering the location and environment (e.g. avoiding unnecessary intervention in front of peers).
- Where possible, clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and what the pupil needs to do. For pupils with communication difficulties or EAL, use verbal and/or non-verbal strategies and allow adequate time to process.
- Seek to understand how the pupil is feeling and use this to determine whether the intervention should continue, be reduced or stopped.

7. When Might it Be Appropriate to Use Reasonable Force?

Examples of situations that may require restraint are:

- A pupil attacks a member of staff, or another pupil
- Pupils fighting
- Pupils causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials, substances or objects
- Pupils running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way in which they might cause an accident likely to injure themselves or others
- Pupils persistently refusing to obey an order to leave an area

- Members of staff have the power to use reasonable force to prevent pupils committing an offence, injuring themselves or others, and to maintain good order and discipline at the School or among pupils

8. Intervention

This may take several forms:

- Physically intervening between pupils
- Blocking a pupil's path
- Holding, pushing or pulling
- Leading a pupil by hand or arm
- Shepherding a pupil by placing their hand in the centre of their back
- In extreme cases, using a more restrictive hold or taking action necessary to prevent injury. This action must be consistent with 'reasonable force'

In normal circumstances staff should **not** act in a way that might cause injury, for example by:

- Holding a pupil by the neck
- Slapping, kicking or punching a pupil
- Twisting or forcing limb joints
- Tripping a pupil
- Holding a pupil by the hair or ear
- Holding a pupil face down on the ground
- Holding a pupil in a way which may be interpreted as indecent

In addition: pupils must never be restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation — for example by covering the mouth and/or nose, or applying pressure to the neck region or abdomen. If a pupil is unintentionally taken to the ground, staff must release hold or reposition into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.

It is anticipated at all times that any element of force will **only** be used when all other attempts to defuse the situation have failed.

9. Factors to Be Taken into Account

The needs and particular vulnerabilities of individual pupils (including any SEND, mental health needs or medical conditions) will be considered and reasonable adjustments will be made. The School will establish proactive and positive behaviour support strategies for pupils with particular

needs, in consultation with their parents, to reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviour and the need to use reasonable force.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) may be disproportionately subject to the use of restrictive interventions. Triggers may include pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar situations or environments, or feelings of fear and anxiety. Pupils who are non-verbal or find verbal communication challenging may express distress through their actions.

The School will seek to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour in order to provide proactive support and create an inclusive environment. Staff who know individual pupils well will be utilised to identify and manage trigger points.

Where appropriate, the School will work with pupils with SEND and their parents in the co-production of behaviour support plans. Behaviour support plans will: outline adjustments to the School environment or routines; detail strategies for the pupil to communicate their needs; specify any circumstances where increased physical contact may be appropriate, agreed with parents and relevant professionals; and be reviewed with the pupil and their parent periodically and following any significant incident.

Where a pupil has a disability, the School has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to take reasonable steps to avoid disadvantage so that the pupil can fully participate in the education provided by the School.

10. 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 try to leave. This may only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. In such circumstances, the pupil is not acting with intent. Seclusion must never be used as a punishment, to enforce compliance, or as a routine behaviour management tool.

When seclusion is used:

- The place to which the pupil is confined must be safe and must not feel threatening or intimidating to the pupil.
- The pupil must be supervised at all times during the period of seclusion.
- As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil must be allowed to leave.
- The incident must be recorded and reported to parents in accordance with the recording and reporting procedures set out in Section 11 of this Policy.

11. Reporting and Recording Incidents

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) should be informed of any incident as soon as possible and will take responsibility for making arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised. A member of SLT and the Head of Phase or if the pupil is in Reception, the Reception Teacher and the Head of Lower School, should always be involved in debriefing the pupil involved and any victims of the incident should be offered support.

If the behaviour is part of an ongoing pattern, it may be necessary to address the situation through the development of a Behavioural Plan, which may include an anger management programme, or other strategies agreed by the Head of Learning Enrichment. It is also helpful to consider the circumstances precipitating the incident to explore ways in which future incidents can be avoided.

Statutory recording duty – use of force

In accordance with section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, a written record must be made of every significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil. The Head or DSL should be notified immediately, and this record must be logged on CPOMS as soon as practicable after the incident and no later than the same day.

The record must include as a minimum:

- Names of the pupil and staff directly involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil has an identified SEND and their SEN status code
- Time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- A brief account of the incident, including what led up to it, identified or potential triggers, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used, the type of force applied and the degree of force
- A brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary
- Details of any post-incident support, including medical treatment for injuries

Statutory reporting duty – use of force

In accordance with section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, a member of the SLT must report each significant incident of use of force to the parents of the pupil involved as soon as practicable after the incident, and no later than the same day, unless it was deemed by Head or DSL that reporting would likely cause significant harm to the pupil. Initial contact should be made by phone, followed by a report in writing. The written report must include as a minimum:

- Time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- A brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary
- A brief account of the type and degree of force used
- Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable

Parents should be invited to have a follow-up discussion about the incident, including any triggers, whether any behaviour support plan was followed, the effectiveness of de-escalation strategies, and what might be done differently in future.

Recording and reporting — seclusion and non-physical restraint

In accordance with the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025, a written record must be made of every incident of seclusion or restraint (including restraint that does not involve direct physical contact, such as the removal of a pupil's mobility aid). The same day expectation for recording and reporting applies.

The minimum content of a seclusion/restraint record mirrors that required for significant force incidents (see above). Parents must be informed by a member of SLT as soon as practicable and no later than the same day. Initial contact should be made by phone, followed by a report in writing.

Where a non-physical restraint incident also constitutes a significant incident of use of force, only one report is required to parents — the School need not report the same incident twice.

Post-incident debrief and pupil/staff wellbeing

Following any incident involving the use of restrictive intervention, the School will hold a structured follow-up conversation to facilitate reflection, learning and to support pupil and staff wellbeing. This debrief should:

- Be based on separate reflections from the staff member(s) and pupil(s) involved
- Aim to understand what happened and why, and to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue
- Be conducted by the Head
- Include consideration of whether any pupils who witnessed the incident require support

If appropriate, the pupil and staff member involved must receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. The School will continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed, including further follow-up conversations, counselling or other resources.

12. Complaints

It is possible that a parental complaint may ensue, in line with the School's complaints procedure. It is important that this Policy has been followed and that the measures used were reasonable in the circumstances.

All staff should be aware that physical contact of any sort may be misconstrued, however innocent. Some physical contact may be necessary or appropriate in certain subjects (e.g. dance, drama, PE etc.), or circumstances (e.g. injury) but staff should always use professional judgement, informed by this Policy and its associated government guidance documents. It is important that if any pupil is particularly sensitive to physical contact that information has been circulated to all staff.

13. Record Keeping

All records created in accordance with this Policy are managed in line with the School's Policies that apply to the retention and destruction of records. These records may contain personal data whose use will be in accordance with data protection law.

14. Monitoring and Review

The School will undertake systematic, ongoing auditing of logs documenting any situations in which restrictive interventions have been applied separate from individual incident and Policy reviews. This audit, conducted at least termly by the Head and DSL, will examine patterns and trends across incidents to identify concerning developments, such as repeated use with particular individuals or inconsistencies in Policy application. Findings will be reported to the Governors to enable early identification of systemic issues and inform targeted training or Policy refinements.

In its regular review of incident data, the Governors will specifically examine:

- Any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions against pupils who share protected characteristics, have SEND, or other vulnerabilities
- Repeated patterns involving individual pupils and the effectiveness of any behaviour support plans in place
- Any patterns suggesting training or development needs for particular staff members or departments
- Whether the overall frequency and nature of incidents is changing over time and whether policy or environmental changes are having the desired effect

This Policy will be subject to review annually by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Governing Body. The date of the next review is shown on the front page.