



Reach Schools

Restraint, Physical Intervention and Use of Reasonable Force Policy

Document Control Table	
Title	Restraint, Physical Intervention and Use of Reasonable Force Policy
Category	Student
Owner	Trust DSL
Date approved	23rd March 2026
Approved by	Board of Trustees
Date of next review	September 2026
Updates/revisions	
Schools to note: This is a Reach Schools Policy and should not be modified.	



**Reach
Schools**

CHOICE & OPPORTUNITY
FOR EVERY CHILD

This policy has been prepared for the support of all teaching and support staff who come into contact with students who may need to be positively handled. This policy should be read in conjunction with other policies relating to interaction between adults and students, specifically the school's Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding policy. The policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of trustees.



Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Purpose of the policy	2
3. Definitions	3
4. Underpinning Values	4
5. Training	5
6. Strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour	5
De-escalation techniques	6
Non-verbal strategies	6
Verbal strategies	7
Escalating situations	8
Types of incidents	10
Examples of situations which fall within one of the first two categories are:	10
7. Acceptable measures of physical Intervention	10
Use of reasonable force to search pupils	11
8. Unacceptable uses of force	12
SEN and Disabilities:	12
9. Seclusion	13
10. Recording and reporting of use of force, seclusion and non-force related restraint	14
10. Action after an Incident	15
11. Children with Additional Educational Needs and Positive touch	16
Types of positive touch	16
12. Monitoring of incidents	17
13. Complaints	18



1. Introduction

Reach Schools recognises the right of every person to be protected from harm and, for that reason, seeks to protect all children and young people against any form of physical intervention which is either unnecessary, inappropriate (either to the individual or in the prevailing circumstances) excessive or unlawful. This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies relating to interaction between adults and students, specifically the school's Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding policy.

2. Purpose of the policy

Good professional relationships between staff and students are vital to ensure good order in school. It is recognised that the majority of students in school respond positively to the discipline practiced by the staff. This ensures the well-being and safety of all students and staff. It is also acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances staff may need to take action in situations where the use of reasonable force may be required. Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff clearly:

- 1) Understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where reasonable force is necessary and
- 2) Key members of staff are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations should they occur.

The application of any form of physical control places staff in a vulnerable situation. It can only be justified according to the circumstances described in this policy. Staff, therefore, have a responsibility to follow the policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for physical intervention.



Physical intervention including restraint and reasonable force will only be used as a last resort when all other behaviour management strategies have failed or when students, staff or property are at risk.

3. Equality statement

Some children display more challenging and physical behaviours both in and out of school. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise children's diverse circumstances. We ensure that all children have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face. We give special consideration to children who:

- Have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or health conditions (see section 10); 11
- Are young carers;
- May experience discrimination due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender identification or sexuality;
- Have English as an additional language (EAL);
- Are known to be living in difficult situations – for example, temporary accommodation or where there are issues such as substance abuse or domestic violence;
- Are at risk of Female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual exploitation, forced marriage, or radicalisation;
- Are asylum seekers;
- Are at risk due to either their own or a family member's mental health needs;
- Are looked after or previously looked after (see section 12);



- Are missing or absent from education for prolonged periods and/or repeat occasions; and
- Whose parent/carer has expressed an intention to remove them from school to be home educated

4. Definitions

(a) **Physical Contact** : Situations in which proper physical contact takes place between staff and students, e.g. in sports/PE, first aid or to comfort distressed pupils or greeting them with a handshake.

b) **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.

c) **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.

D) **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.

E) **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.

F) **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 are to not be construed as an endorsement for use in Reach Schools.

5. Underpinning Values

Everyone attending or working at Reach Schools has the right to:

- a recognition of their unique identity;
- be treated with respect and dignity;
- learn and work in a safe environment and ;
- be protected from harm, violence, assault and acts of verbal abuse

Students attending this school and their families have a right to:

- individual consideration of students' needs by staff that have responsibility for their care and protection;
- expect staff to undertake duties and responsibilities in accordance with the school's policies;
- be informed about school rules, relevant policies and the expected conduct of all students and staff working in the school and;
- be informed about the school's complaint procedure

Reach Schools will ensure that all students understand the need for, and respond to, clearly defined limits which govern behaviour in the school. Families should have committed themselves through the Whatever It Takes Commitments to ensure the good behaviour of their child and that the child understands and follows the school's Behaviour Policy.



6. Training

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances. To prevent or stop a pupil from:

1. Causing injury to themselves or others;
2. Committing a criminal offence;
3. Damaging property; or
4. Causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

However, wherever possible we will use staff who have had appropriate training. Training will be made available to designated staff and will be the responsibility of the co-headteachers. The senior leadership and the Safeguarding Team along with some specific individual authorised staff (e.g. SEN teachers) will undergo training as appropriate. No member of staff will be expected to undertake the use of reasonable force or restraint without appropriate training. Prior to the provision of training, guidance will be given on action to be taken. Arrangements will be made clear as part of the induction of staff and training will be provided as part of ongoing staff development.

Employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees. Therefore, we carry out risk assessments to ensure that staff who regularly work alongside pupils where the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions may be required can do so as safely as possible. This is the responsibility of the co-headteachers.



7. Strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour

Staff consistently must use positive strategies to encourage acceptable behaviour and good order. Every effort will be made to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to pupils or staff, property, buildings or the environment.

Where unacceptable behaviour threatens good order and discipline and provokes intervention, some or all of the following approaches should be taken according to the circumstances of the incident:

- Verbal acknowledgement of unacceptable behaviour with request for the pupil to refrain;
- Further verbal reprimand stating that this is the second request for compliance; an explanation of why observed behaviour is unacceptable; an explanation of what will happen if the unacceptable behaviour continues;
- Warning of intention to intervene physically and that this will cease when the pupil complies. If possible summon assistance;
- Physical intervention. Reasonable force uses the minimum degree of force to prevent a child harming him or herself, others or property.

De-escalation techniques

1. The use of your voice and words;
2. Distraction techniques;
3. Removing all objects/implements that are currently making the situation unsafe; and
4. Seeking out support from other members of staff, staff who have a good relationship with that child/or simply are a fresh face.

Non-verbal strategies

Ensure you are modelling the behaviour you want the child to emulate; relaxed and open body language can be helpful.



1. Appear calm and self-assured. Make sure you are not displaying the same signs of agitation that can be seen in the child;
2. Maintain a neutral facial expression; and
3. Allow space. Entering a person's personal space can be useful to refocus on a task when the situation is calm, but when a child is agitated this can indicate aggression and escalate the situation. Staying some distance away will also help keep you safe should the child become physically aggressive.

Verbal strategies

1. Lower your voice and keep your tone even. It is hard to escalate a conversation with someone who is responding calmly.
2. Distraction and diversion are extremely useful. When a child is aggressive, they are responding with their own fight-or-flight instincts and not thinking about their actions; Distract them and engage their thinking brain, perhaps by changing the subject or commenting on something that is happening outside the window;
3. Give choices, repeat these using the broken-record technique if necessary, and do not get drawn into secondary behaviours such as arguing back, which are designed to distract or upset you;
4. Acknowledging the child's feelings shows that you have listened to them, and can be crucial when diffusing a situation; for example, 'It must be really difficult for you ... thank you for letting me know';
5. Use words and phrases that de-escalate, such as: I wonder if... Let's try... It seems like... Maybe we can...; and
6. Tell the child what you want them to do rather than what you do not want them to do; for example, 'I want you to sit down' rather than, 'Stop arguing with me';

Staff should remember their great relationships with students within the school and use their knowledge on the children to support the de-escalation of situations. For example, if you know a child really well and their behaviour patterns and think a student is about to be



aggressive or cause damage, then you can use the strategies in this policy to remove them from the classroom before the situation escalates.

Using reasonable force or restraint techniques on a pupil should only be used when all the other reasonable methods of managing the above situations have been tried.

Escalating situations

The 1996 Education Act (Section 550A) stipulates that reasonable force may be used to prevent a student from doing, or continuing to do any of the following;

- Committing any offence (including criminal offences, even if below the age of criminal responsibility);
- Causing personal injury to anyone, including themselves (e.g., self-harm);
- Causing damage to property, including their own property; and
- Engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order and discipline, whether during lessons or otherwise.

There will be times when school staff may need to use restrictive interventions, and they should know this option may be available to them. The decision on whether it is reasonable to use a restrictive intervention depends on the individual circumstances of each situation. To make this assessment, the member of staff should consider the following:

Is it necessary?

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



Is it proportionate?

- Staff should 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 itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy;
- Staff should consider the personal circumstances of the pupil such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.

Has the pupil's welfare been considered?

- Staff should consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. For example, pupils who have experienced an adverse life event, with diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, past trauma or neglect, communication difficulties, or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing;
- 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;
- Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and explain what the pupil needs to do;
- For pupils with difficulties with speech, language and communication, or with English as an additional language, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies should be used to ensure the pupil understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond;
- Staff should seek to understand how the pupil is feeling and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.



This list of factors is not exhaustive, and staff should also take into account other relevant considerations. Training on the use of restrictive interventions will equip staff to judge when it is appropriate to use restrictive interventions, including in situations where quick decisions are needed. It should also help staff understand how to assess whether their response is reasonable under pressure. Where possible we recommend that staff are constantly sense checking their decisions in the moment and reflecting on this after the event. If an assessment has been made to use restrictive interventions, staff should be supported in their decision making.

Types of incidents

Incidents described above fall into 3 broad categories:

- Where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury;
- Where there is a developing risk of injury, or significant damage to property; and
- Where a student is behaving in a way that is compromising good order or discipline.

Examples of situations which fall within one of the first two categories are:

- a student attacks a member of staff or another student;
- students are fighting;
- a student is causing, or at risk of causing injury, damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of materials or objects.

Examples of behaviour which fall into the third category are:

- a student persistently refusing to do as requested; and
- a student is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson.



8. Acceptable measures of physical Intervention

The use of any degree of force can only be deemed reasonable if:

- it is warranted by the particular circumstances of the incident;
- it is delivered in accordance with the seriousness of the incident and the consequences which it is desired to prevent;
- it is carried out as the minimum to achieve the desired result;
- the age, understanding and the gender of the student are taken into account; and
- it is likely to achieve the desired result.

Wherever possible, assistance will be sought from another member of staff before intervention. Physical intervention uses the minimum degree of force necessary for the shortest period of time to prevent a pupil harming himself, herself, others or property.

The form of physical intervention may involve staff doing the following:

- physically interposing themselves between students if there is potential fight;
- blocking a student's path to stop them from harming another student, for example by placing a hand on each shoulder and helping to change the direction of travel of the student;
- escorting a student away from a dangerous situation; and
- shepherding a student away.

In extreme circumstances, trained staff may need to use more restrictive holds, all of which are recognised techniques.

Any such measures will be most effective in the context of the overall ethos of Reach Schools, the way in which staff exercise their responsibilities and the behaviour management strategies used.



Whenever reasonable force is used, staff will keep talking to the student ensuring that they are using calm language to attempt to de-escalate the situation, narrate their actions to the child, distract the child and/ or make sure that the child is aware of what they need to do to end the use of reasonable force.

Use of reasonable force to search pupils

Co-Head teachers and staff they authorise have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item. A member of staff can use such force as is reasonable to search for legally prohibited items, but not to search for items banned under the school rules only. Staff should refer to the [Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools guidance document](#) for detailed advice on searching a pupil and the relevant section entitled "Searching, screening and confiscation" of the Behaviour Policy.

9. Unacceptable uses of force

Pupils should not 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. The use of force can be dangerous, particularly where it occurs on the ground. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their holds or re-position into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible. Where appropriate, the pupil should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible.

For any form of restraint, including seated and standing, there is a risk of physical and psychological harm, and it should be avoided where possible.



SEN and Disabilities:

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 find verbal communication challenging may express their needs, discomfort or confusion through actions. This can lead to pupils with SEND being disproportionately subject to the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions. We will always seek to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour so that we can provide proactive support, create an inclusive environment.

We will 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 reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions being used. We will also work with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies

When applying measures such as reasonable force and restraint in response to incidents involving children with SEN and disabilities, Reach Schools considers the risks carefully, given the additional vulnerability of the group. To safeguard a student or others, it may be necessary to use a hold even though it is likely to impact on the well-being of the child.

Reach School plans positive and proactive behaviour support plans for certain students which detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil. This is discussed in conjunction with the relevant persons, such as parents, staff and 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, we will have a risk assessment in place and where possible, mitigate risks such as through prevention strategies.



Whether the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions is appropriate will depend on the circumstances, irrespective of whether it has been considered as part of a behaviour support plan.

10. Seclusion

Seclusion - a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving - should 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 should not be implemented by staff through threat of punishment.

The place to which the pupil is confined should be safe and not feel threatening or intimidating to the pupil. The pupil should be supervised at all times during the period of seclusion. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil should be allowed to leave.

An incident involving the use of seclusion must be recorded and reported in accordance with Reach Schools procedures.

Seclusion, as defined in this policy is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. There are disciplinary measures that are similar, such as removal from the classroom. Reach Schools consults the [Behaviour in schools guidance](#) in relation to our Behaviour policy.



11. Recording and reporting of use of force, seclusion and non-force related restraint

A contemporaneous record (i.e. written as soon as possible and no longer than 24 hours after the incident's occurrence) should be made by the staff member involved in the incident on this [form](#) and then recorded on the school's information management system CPOMS.

It is a legal requirement that all incidents of physical force or holding that has been used is recorded appropriately on CPOMS as soon as possible or within 24 hours.

Section 93 A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 does not require schools to record and report instances of restrictive interventions where force was not used. However, as best practice we apply the same recording and reporting policy to restrictive interventions where force is not used.

Parents/Carers will be informed that day of that incident, ideally in person and will include a discussion about the following:

- any behavioural triggers or warning signs of an impending incident
- whether any agreed behaviour support plans were followed
- what de-escalation strategies were used and how effective they were
- what might be done differently in the future

12. Action after an Incident

The Co-headteacher or Designated Safeguarding lead will ensure that each incident is reviewed and investigated further as required. If further action is required in relation to a member of staff or a student, this will be pursued through the appropriate procedure:



- Safeguarding and Child protection procedure including safeguarding staff against allegations of abuse
- School Behaviour policy
- Exclusions Procedure

Members of staff will be kept informed of any action taken. In case of any action concerning a member of staff, they will be advised to seek advice from his/her professional association/union.

When an incident happens we follow an internal procedure to ensure that we are meeting the safety and wellbeing of both our students and staff members involved. Please see below:

Incident happens

1. The child who was involved in the incident is checked on during the school day to ensure they are okay and not hurt - a suitable member of staff e.g. a form tutor or head of year organises this.
2. Families of that child are called on that day and invited in for a meeting and updated - In most circumstances the person who was leading the restraint will meet with the family. where this is not possible or not suitable a more senior member of staff will lead the meeting.
3. All staff are debriefed and we reflect on the incident within 48 hours - the person leading the restraint to organise with all staff involved including the DSL and the relevant co-head teacher.
4. Everybody involved in the incident logs their account on CPOMS under the Physical intervention tab.



13. Children with Additional Educational Needs and Positive touch

Consent to use touch will be recorded in the student's behaviour support plans and their risk assessments. Positive touch will only be used on children who have completed risk assessments.

Some children with SEN find communication difficult and the use of touch enables adults to reinforce positive communicative exchanges or as the main form of communication in itself. It enables staff to respond non-verbally to a student's own use of physical contact during interactions. These forms of contact are most likely to occur during interaction and routine social exchanges.

Touch also enables staff to offer students reassurance, security and comfort. In context it can be used to help them understand their emotions and feelings.

In most circumstances staff should only ever be making physical contact with the upper part of the body and this primarily should be the hands, arms and shoulder area, unless being positively handled as stated in this policy.

Types of positive touch

- Hugging: members of staff that are using touch for comfort must use a 'school hug'. This is a sideways hug, with the adult putting their hands on the child's shoulders. This discourages 'front on' hugging, and the adult's hands on the shoulders limit the ability of the child to turn themselves into the adult. This can be done either standing or sitting.
- For younger primary aged children hand-Holding: is sometimes appropriate. Children sometimes enjoy being able to hold hands with adults around them when they need some emotional support.. This is acceptable when the hand holding is consensual.



- Head, back and shoulder rub: sometimes children need a rub on the head, back or shoulder to support them in calming down. The use of the touch can be the communication to the child that the staff member is there to support them.

It is very important that, as far as possible, the students give consent to any touch. All staff should be sensitive to any verbal or non-verbal communication from students indicating they do not want to be touched. It must always be considered that for touch to be positive it should be consensual; therefore it is important that you verbalise what you are going to do. For example 'I am going to rub your back to make you feel better, is this okay for me to do this?'

Where a young person indicates that touch from an adult is not welcome, perhaps by moving away or flinching to avoid, the staff member should apologise to demonstrate a respect for personal boundaries. Staff should be aware of any changes in a student's behaviour which may indicate the need to reduce or withdraw touch. All changes in behaviour in response to touch should be recorded on CPOMs and the student's support plans.

Reach Schools will seek consent from families if we feel positive touch will be a necessary and supportive measure in school for their child. We will discuss and record the type of touch intended to use.

14. Monitoring of incidents

Whenever a member of staff has occasion to use reasonable force/restraint, this will always be recorded and documented. Monitoring of incidents will help to ensure that staff are following the correct procedures and will alert the Co-headteachers to the needs of any student(s) whose behaviour can only be contained using reasonable force. This process will address patterns of incidents and evaluate trends which may be emerging.



**Reach
Schools**

CHOICE & OPPORTUNITY
FOR EVERY CHILD

15. Complaints

The availability of a clear policy regarding physical intervention and early involvement of families should reduce the likelihood of complaints but may not eliminate them. Any complaints about staff will be dealt with under Reach School's Complaints Policy. If an allegation regarding inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions is made against a member of staff, the procedures in [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) should be followed. This includes the provisions regarding suspension of staff.