



Fairfield Primary School Restrictive Interventions & Use of Reasonable Force Policy

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1. Legal Framework and Definitions

This policy complies with current statutory guidance on restrictive interventions and the use of reasonable force in schools (DfE, April 2026), alongside duties under the Equality Act 2010, the Human Rights Act 1998, and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).

The governing body ensures that the school behaviour policy explicitly includes the lawful use of reasonable force.

Key Definitions

Restrictive Intervention

Any planned or reactive action that restricts a pupil's movement, liberty, or freedom to act independently. This includes both physical force and non-physical interventions that restrict autonomy.

Non-physical Restrictive Intervention

An action that limits a pupil's freedom without physical force (e.g. preventing exit, removing an item), used only where necessary to prevent imminent harm and proportionate to the risk and the pupil's needs.

Reasonable Force

The minimum force necessary, applied for the shortest possible time, to prevent imminent risk of harm.

Significant Incident

Any incident where force goes beyond appropriate everyday physical contact (e.g. guiding or comforting), including all uses of restrictive intervention that meet statutory recording thresholds.

Seclusion

A restrictive intervention where a pupil is prevented from leaving a space.

- This must only be used as a last resort
- Only where there is an imminent risk of serious harm
- It must be continuously monitored
- It must end immediately once the risk reduces
- It must never be used as punishment
- The environment must be safe, non-threatening, and appropriate for the pupil.

Safe Space (Distinction)

A voluntary, pupil-led strategy for self-regulation. This is not a restrictive intervention.

2. Preventative Strategies and De-escalation

The school prioritises prevention. Restrictive interventions must never replace effective behaviour support. Staff will create a calm, nurturing space that is built on successful relationships. This will be achieved by:

- Calm, predictable routines and expectations
- Clear instructions and consistent boundaries
- Use of de-escalation strategies (tone, space, time, processing)
- Structured choices and visual supports, particularly for pupils with SEND.
- Tactical ignoring of secondary behaviours
- Early intervention when signs of dysregulation appear

- Restrictive intervention must only be considered where de-escalation has been attempted or is not safely possible.

3. Lawful Use of Restrictive Interventions

Staff may use reasonable force only to prevent imminent risk of:

- Injury to the pupil or others
- Serious damage to property
- A criminal offence
- Serious disorder that presents a risk of harm and cannot be managed by non-physical means

Before acting, staff must make a rapid dynamic risk assessment:

- Necessity: Is there an immediate risk of harm?
- Proportionality: Is this the least restrictive option?
- Welfare: Have individual needs (SEND, trauma, medical) been considered?

Searching Pupils

Reasonable force may be used to search for prohibited items where permitted by law. Force must not be used for items banned only by school rules.

Physical Contact (Non-restrictive)

Appropriate supportive contact is permitted and encouraged where necessary (e.g. first aid, guiding a pupil, reassurance).

Prohibited Practices

Staff must never:

- Use force as punishment
- Restrict breathing, airway, or circulation
- Use pain-inducing techniques
- Use seclusion outside strict legal conditions
- Ground Restraint must be avoided unless absolutely unavoidable in a dynamic, high-risk situation. If it occurs unintentionally, staff must reposition as quickly as possible.

4. Equity and Pupils with SEND or Vulnerabilities

The school recognises that restrictive interventions can disproportionately affect vulnerable groups. Reasonable adjustments will be made in line with legal duties.

For pupils at higher risk of dysregulation:

- Individual Behaviour Support Plans and Risk Assessments will be co-produced
- Plans will include triggers, preventative strategies, and agreed responses
- Adjustments to environment and communication will be implemented
- Clear parameters for any necessary physical intervention will be defined

Any restrictive intervention involving a disabled pupil must be demonstrably necessary, proportionate, and non-discriminatory.

5. Recording, Reporting, and Monitoring

All incidents must be recorded in line with statutory requirements.

Recording Requirements

All restrictive interventions must be logged as soon as practicable and ideally on the same day.

Records must include:

- Names of pupil and staff
- Time, date, location, and duration
- Pupil characteristics (including SEND status)
- Antecedents and triggers
- Justification for intervention (necessity and proportionality)
- Type and level of intervention used
- De-escalation attempts
- Any injuries sustained
- Post-incident support
- Pupil voice (where appropriate)
- Parental Notification

Parents/carers must be informed in writing following any significant incident as soon as practicable, ideally the same day.

Notification must include:

- Time, date, location, duration
- Reason for intervention
- Type of force used
- Details of any injury

After this, parents will be offered a follow-up discussion.

Exceptions

Reporting may be withheld where it would likely place the pupil at risk of serious harm; in such cases, the Local Authority will be informed.

Monitoring

Senior leaders will regularly analyse data to identify:

- Patterns and trends
- Disproportionate use (SEND, ethnicity, vulnerability, looked-after status)
- Training and support needs

Governors will review anonymised data termly.

6. Post-Incident Support and Repair

Following any incident:

- Immediate physical wellbeing must be checked
- First aid or medical support provided if required
- Emotional support offered to pupil, staff, and witnesses

A structured debrief will take place:

- Led by a neutral adult where possible
- Focused on reflection, understanding, and learning
- Used to update support plans where needed

The aim is to restore relationships and enable a positive reset.

7. Staff Training and Wellbeing

The school will ensure:

- All relevant staff receive initial and regular (at least annual) training
- Training includes legal framework, de-escalation, and safe techniques
- Scenario-based practice is included
- Risk assessments are in place for staff working with high-risk pupils
- Staff involved in incidents will be offered wellbeing support, including access to external services where needed.

8. Complaints and Allegations

All concerns will be managed in line with the school's complaints and safeguarding procedures. Allegations against staff will be handled in accordance with statutory safeguarding guidance.

9. Communication

This policy will be:

- Published on the school website
- Accessible to staff, parents, and pupils
- Embedded through staff training and induction

10. Guiding Principles

- Restrictive intervention is always a last resort
- Safety, dignity, and rights of the pupil are paramount
- Interventions must be necessary, proportionate, and time-limited
- Prevention and de-escalation are always the priority
- Every incident is an opportunity for learning and improvement