Use of Reasonable Force and Other Restrictive Interventions Policy

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1. Introduction

This policy sets out Reach South Academy Trust's approach to the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, in accordance with the latest Department for Education (DfE) guidance.

The Trust is committed to safeguarding the safety, dignity and wellbeing of all pupils and staff. Restrictive interventions are recognised as high-risk and potentially distressing and will only ever be used when reasonable, proportionate, necessary and as a last resort.

The Trust takes a clear and consistent stance on the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force. Restrictive interventions will only ever be used as a last resort, when all other preventative and de-escalation strategies have been exhausted or are clearly inadequate in the circumstances, and only to prevent an immediate risk of harm to the pupil, other pupils, staff, or significant damage to property. Any intervention must be reasonable, proportionate, necessary, time-limited, and in the best interests of the child. The Trust does not permit the use of pain-inducing techniques, prone restraint, or any method that restricts breathing, circulation, or places a pupil at unacceptable risk. Staff are expected to prioritise trauma-informed practice, early intervention and positive relationships, and all use of restrictive interventions must comply with this policy, DfE guidance, and statutory recording and reporting duties.

The Trust's approach prioritises:

- Prevention
- Early support
- De-escalation
- Trauma-informed and relationship-based practice

Restrictive interventions will only be used when it is in the best interests of the pupil and wider school community.

This policy should be read alongside the following policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Staff Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy
- Low Level Concerns Policy
- Allegations Against Staff Policy

And the most up to date version of:

- Use of reasonable force in schools - GOV.UK

- Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK
- Searching, screening and confiscation in schools - GOV.UK

The Headteacher/Head of School will ensure that staff are familiar with and correctly apply this policy. This policy will be reviewed every two years.

All staff are required to understand and adhere to this policy. Failure to follow the expectations, procedures and statutory duties set out in this policy may be considered a breach of professional conduct and could result in management or disciplinary action in line with the Trust's HR policies.

2. Definitions

For clarity, this policy uses the following terms:

- Restrictive intervention: an umbrella term describing physical and non-physical actions used to prevent, restrict, or subdue a pupil's movement/liberty in order to reduce an immediate risk of harm.
- Reasonable force: a statutory term which includes physical restrictive interventions. "Reasonable" means no more force than necessary for the least amount of time, based on the circumstances.
- Restraint: a non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises or limits movement, which may occur with or without direct physical contact (depending on context and method).
- Seclusion: a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined away from others and prevented from leaving (by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave).
- Significant incident: any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between a member of staff and a pupil (see below).

3. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Ensure all staff understand when and how restrictive interventions may be used
- Ensure compliance with statutory recording and reporting duties
- Protect the rights, dignity and welfare of pupils and staff
- Reduce the need for restrictive interventions through prevention and de-escalation
- Promote a safe, inclusive and supportive learning environment
- Provide clarity for pupils, parents/carers, staff and governors

4. Appropriate physical contact

We do not operate a "no contact" policy. There are circumstances when physical contact is appropriate and does not constitute a restrictive intervention. Examples include:

- providing first aid
- guiding or escorting pupils safely
- comforting a distressed pupil
- congratulations or praise (e.g., handshake)

Any physical contact must be consistent with safeguarding expectations, the pupil's needs and preferences, and professional judgement.

5. De-escalation and prevention techniques

Prevention is the Trust's primary and preferred approach to behaviour support and the management of risk. Reach South Academy Trust places a clear emphasis on preventing escalation wherever possible, ensuring that early support, proactive strategies, and trauma-informed, relationship-based practice are consistently used before any form of restrictive intervention is considered. Staff must always prioritise approaches that reduce the likelihood of distress or crisis, recognising that restrictive interventions carry inherent risk and should only be used when all preventative options have been exhausted or are clearly insufficient in an immediate situation.

Strategies implemented at school level include, but not limited to:

- consideration of how the school and classroom environment can support all pupils to achieve and thrive
- sharing best practice for whole-class behaviour management, and for managing communal spaces such as corridors and playgrounds
- training staff in effective communication strategies, such as using appropriate tone of voice and empathy to aid de-escalation
- development of working staff-pupil relationships and trust
- recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning

Individual pupil strategies include but not limited to:

- working closely with parents/carers to support individual pupils
- strategies to support individual pupils based on their identified needs, including the development of behaviour support plans. Where a pupil has a disability, Trusts have a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010 to support pupils with reasonable adjustments, making sure they can benefit from what the school offers
- giving pupils time, space and strategies to calm down before their behaviour escalates

The Trust recognises that pupils with SEND may be disproportionately affected by restrictive interventions.

We will:

- Identify triggers and unmet needs
- Make reasonable adjustments
- Co-produce behaviour support plans with parents/carers and other professionals where appropriate
- Review plans following incidents
- Implement personalised risk assessments where appropriate
- Prioritise inclusive, preventative strategies

6. Use of Restrictive Interventions (including reasonable force)

Who may use reasonable force

All members of staff have a legal power to use reasonable force. Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 grants staff the legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances, to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- causing injury to themselves or others
- committing a criminal offence
- damaging property
- causing disorder among pupils at school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

While all staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in unforeseen or emergency situations to prevent immediate risk of harm, this does not mean that all staff may carry out planned or repeated restrictive interventions. Unplanned or emergency use of reasonable force may be used by any staff member when there is no safer option available. However, any planned, foreseeable, or risk-assessed use of restrictive physical intervention must only be carried out by staff who have received the appropriate accredited training and have been authorised by the Headteacher/Head of School.

Planned physical interventions may only be used by staff who have received appropriate training. Best practice is for two trained members of staff to support the pupil.

All staff receive de-escalation training and identified staff receive accredited physical intervention training appropriate to their role. This includes ensuring at least one member of SLT is trained in accredited physical intervention training. The principles of this training is aligned with minimum force, maximum care, risk reduction and behaviour as communication.

When to use reasonable force

When determining the use of reasonable force, staff must use professional judgement, the principles of dynamic risk assessments (unforeseeable risk in fast changing situations), and formal risk assessments (identified foreseeable risks with control measures to mitigate the risk as much as possible). Staff must also determine the following.

Where foreseeable risks have been identified, a formal risk assessment must be completed and kept up to date, and the findings must be reflected in the pupil's Positive Handling Plan so that any planned use of reasonable force is clearly documented and reviewed regularly.

Is it Necessary:

- Are there less restrictive options available
- Would intervention reduce risk or escalate the situation

Is it Proportionate:

- Staff should use the least restrictive approach for the shortest time required
- If the intervention is escalating the situation, staff should use an alternative approach
- Staff should consider the pupil's welfare, age, size, SEND/vulnerabilities, medical needs, trauma history, communication needs, and the impact of the intervention
- Staff should maintain respect and privacy wherever possible

Restrictive interventions must **never** be used as punishment. None of the techniques used are: pain compliant, restricts breathing or circulation, involves pressure on the neck, chest, abdomen or joints.

The use of Grounds Holds is not part our current response and we do not anticipate the need for Ground Holds. Staff are trained to the appropriate level of training based on the needs of the Trust and staff are expected to respond to situations in line with their level of training.

The Trust does not permit the use of prone (face-down) restraint under any circumstances, whether planned or unplanned, due to the increased risk to breathing, circulation and overall pupil safety.

If in an exceptionally rare circumstance the use of a Ground Hold is identified as part of a planned risk assessment and positive handling plan for a pupil, this would require consultation with, agreement and ratification from the Trust Head of Safeguarding and adequate training for the individual school. This process would involve consideration from an appropriate professional panel, chaired by the Head of Safeguarding to ensure that decisions are made in the best interest of the child.

Any consideration of a ground hold must also comply with the Trust's explicit prohibition on prone (face-down) restraint, and under no circumstances should a ground hold place a pupil in a position that compromises breathing, circulation, or airway safety.

Use of reasonable Force to Search Pupils

Staff are authorised to search a pupil or their possessions where they have grounds to suspect a pupil may have prohibited items. Staff can use reasonable force to search for legally prohibited items as stated in section 550A (3) of the Education Act 1996. Staff must follow current DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools guidance. If an item is found staff will act in line with this guidance and record appropriately on our safeguarding recording system - Child Protection Online Monitoring System (CPOMS).

7. Seclusion

The Trust does not permit seclusion to be used as a planned behaviour management strategy under any circumstances. Seclusion may only ever occur as an immediate, dynamic risk response in situations where a pupil's behaviour presents an imminent risk of harm to others and no safer alternative is available. Any use of seclusion must be continuously supervised, time limited, and ended as soon as the risk has reduced. At no point should seclusion be used as punishment, consequence, or a predetermined response within a behaviour plan. All incidents of seclusion must be recorded, reported, and immediately reviewed in line with statutory requirements and Trust procedures.

Seclusion must:

- never be used as a disciplinary response
- take place in a space that is safe and does not feel threatening or punitive
- involve continuous supervision
- end as soon as the immediate risk is reduced and the pupil can safely leave
- be recorded and reported in line with statutory procedures

Any such incident will be subject to immediate review (see monitoring section).

8. Recording and Reporting

All significant incidents involving use of force, and incidents of seclusion and restraint will be recorded in writing using Arbor, the Trust Management Information System as soon as practicable, and staff should endeavour to record no later than the same day.

A member of SLT must be informed immediately after (if not appropriate to during the incident that is taking place).

Each individual school in the Trust will ensure records are in line with:

- The DfE use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions guidance
- The school will also record and report incidents of seclusion and restraint in line with statutory duties under the Schools Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025.

Minimum recorded details include:

- pupil and staff names
- pupil needs/circumstances (including SEN status where relevant)
- time, date, location, duration
- what happened, triggers, prevention/de-escalation attempted
- what reasonable force/intervention/seclusion/restraint was used and why it was necessary
- injuries and medical support (if applicable)
- post-incident support and follow-up

9. Informing Parents/Carers

It is a non-negotiable Trust requirement that parents/carers are informed of any significant incident involving the use of reasonable force, restraint, or seclusion, unless doing so would place the pupil at risk of significant harm. Informing parents is an essential safeguarding expectation and forms part of the Trust's commitment to transparency, partnership with families, and effective post-incident support.

As per the DfE Guidance, parents/carers must be informed of a significant incident, restraint, and seclusion in writing as soon as practicable, and we will endeavour to do so no later than the same day. Our usual practice will be to verbally raise this with parents/carers first, then follow up in writing and a follow-up discussion will be offered where appropriate.

Reporting may be withheld if telling parents/carers would likely cause significant harm to the pupil (including any form of abuse or neglect). In these cases, the school will report it to the relevant Local Authority.

10. Post Incident Support

Following incidents involving restrictive interventions, the school will:

- offer medical assessment where required
- conduct a structured pupil debrief
- conduct a structured pupil debrief with staff
- support pupil and staff wellbeing (including any witnesses where relevant)
- update behaviour support plans/risk assessments as needed
- Conversations to facilitate reflection and learning with pupil and staff.

The debriefs and reflective conversation will be used to identify triggers, patterns and how restrictive intervention might be avoided in the future. They will also look at understanding what happened, why and repair and rebuild relationships.

11. Individual Risk Assessment and Positive Handling Plans

Where foreseeable risks are identified and a pupil has been identified as being more likely to require the use of reasonable force interventions, the school will develop appropriate planning and support measures including an individual risk assessment and positive handling plan.

These documents will include:

- Preventative responses and strategies and reasonable adjustments
- De-escalation responses
- Agreed responses if risk escalates which may include reasonable force

Plans will be reviewed regularly (and as a minimum every 6 weeks) and after each significant incident.

12. Monitoring

A member of SLT will be notified of any significant incident, restraint and seclusion that has taken place on the same day as the incident.

An Immediate review of any incident involving a ground hold, seclusion, injury and/or safeguarding concern must will take place within 24 hours of the incident to ensure timely oversight, safeguarding assurance and appropriate follow-up. Any such incident will also be reported to the Regional Director and Head of Safeguarding. A fortnightly review of recorded incidents will take place by the Headteacher/Head of School and one other member of staff to reflect on whether this could have been avoided, and if this was proportionate, necessary, and reasonable.

The Headteacher/Head of School will ensure the school follows all statutory and non-statutory procedures in line with DfE guidance.

The Headteacher/Head of School and one other member of staff, will review and scrutinise data every 6 weeks relating to the use of force in order to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of behaviour and restraint practices, particularly where restrictive interventions are used repeatedly or over extended periods without evidence of improvement and ensure that less restrictive approaches are prioritised.
- Identify professional development and training needs for staff, ensuring they are confident in de-escalation, positive behaviour support, and the lawful use of reasonable force.
- Analyse patterns, triggers, and frequency of incidents involving individual pupils, to assess whether existing support plans are effective and to inform the development or revision of Behaviour Support Plans, Positive Handling Plans, or risk assessments, in collaboration with parents/carers where appropriate.
- Monitor for disproportionate use of restrictive interventions, particularly in relation to pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), protected characteristics, or other identified vulnerabilities, in line with equality duties under the Equality Act 2010.

The Headteacher/Head of School will provide reasonable force, seclusion and restraint data to the Governing Body every term. The Governing Body will review the data thoroughly, interrogate patterns, impact of interventions, challenge disproportionality, and safeguarding compliance.

Reviews by the Headteacher/Head of School and another identified member of staff can be within their school setting, their Regional Director, or a colleague from another school within the Trust to encourage reflective thinking.

Where the Headteacher/Head of School identifies any concerns, this should be raised with their Regional Director and Head of Safeguarding.

13. Appendices and Resources

To support compliance with this Policy:

- Appendix 1 is an overview of the procedure for staff to follow.
- Appendix 2 has an overview of the monitoring procedure.
- Appendix 3 is to be edited at school level to align with specific school practices.

Additional documents as part of a suite of resources will be provided to schools by the Trust to support consistency in approach. Templates provided must be reviewed at school level and adapted as appropriate to ensure they are fit for purpose for the school context and specific needs of the child.

14. Policy History

Policy Date	Summary of Change	Contact	Implementation Date	Review Date
April 2026	New Trust wide policy in line with DfE April 2026 Guidance	Head of Safeguarding	April 2026	April 2028

Appendix 1 Procedure Overview

This flowchart supports school staff in making safe, lawful, and proportionate decisions when considering physical intervention. It integrates key DfE principles: prevention, de-escalation, and ensuring any use of force is reasonable, proportionate, necessary, and in the best interests of the pupil.

1. Prevention
- Anticipate potential triggers and risk factors.
- Create a calm, structured environment.
- Use proactive strategies such as positive behaviour support, adjustments, and planned interventions.
- Promote emotional regulation and consistent relationships.

2. De-escalation
- Use verbal and non-verbal calming strategies (tone, space, reassurance).
- Follow the pupil's Positive Handling or Behaviour Support Plan.
- Offer choices, distraction, or time-out opportunities.
- Seek support from other staff if necessary.

3. Is Physical Intervention Required?
Ask yourself:
-Is there an immediate risk of harm to the pupil or others?
- Is there a risk of serious damage to property?
- Is behaviour causing significant disruption to learning or order?
- What is the risk of doing something V doing nothing?

If NO → Continue de-escalation and monitoring.
If YES → Proceed to step 4.

4. Reasonable, Proportionate, and Necessary
Before intervening, ensure the response meets all three criteria:
- **Reasonable**: Do only what a calm, trained adult would judge safe and appropriate.
- **Proportionate**: Use the minimum force necessary for the shortest time.
- **Necessary**: Only intervene when there is no safer or effective alternative.

5. Best Interest of the Pupil
Consider:
- Is the intervention intended to protect the pupil or others from harm?
- Could the intervention cause emotional or physical trauma?
- Would stepping back, removing others, or waiting for help be safer?

Only proceed if the action clearly protects the pupil's welfare and dignity.

6. Physical Intervention
- Use approved techniques and follow training.
- Maintain communication and explain actions to the pupil.
- End the intervention as soon as it is safe to do so by constantly dynamically risk assessing when to dis-engage in the best interest of the child
- Preserve safety, dignity, and calm tone throughout.

7. Aftercare and Review
- Check for injuries to pupil or staff and record if any.
- Allow debrief and emotional support for all involved.
- Inform member of SLT and parents/carers.
- Record and report the incident.

- Review patterns, triggers, and behaviour plans to prevent recurrence.
- Staff and student de-briefs completed.
- Records monitored and quality assured.

Appendix 2 – Monitoring Procedure and Schedule Overview

To ensure consistency across all Trust schools, two distinct reporting and monitoring documents must be used:

1. an individual incident reporting form for every significant incident involving reasonable force, restraint or seclusion, and
2. a separate periodic data monitoring form used for same-day and 24 hour immediate, fortnightly, half-termly and termly review cycles. These forms serve different purposes and must not be used interchangeably.

Step 1. Same-Day SLT Notification & Review
Step 2. 24-Hour Immediate Incident Review
Step 3. Fortnightly Monitoring Review (Headteacher/Head of School + Identified Staff Member)
Step 4. Every 6 Weeks Data Scrutiny (Headteacher/Head of School + Identified Staff Member)
Step 5. Governing Body Oversight and Scrutiny

Appendix 3 – Physical Technique List at the Peak Academy

Below you will find a Physical Technique List in line with the level of training at our school.

Prompts and Guides
Show and Go
Caring C
Turn, Gather, Guide

Single person or Two person Escort
Single elbow
Double Elbow
Figure four
Half Shield

Clothing Responses
Tube Grip
Closed Fist Hold – One Hand
Closed Fist Hold – Two Hand

Hair Responses
One Handed Hold
Two Handed Hold
Oyster

Removing objects
Oyster
Corkscrew

Seated Hold
Single elbow
Double Elbow
Figure four