Restrictive Interventions and Use of Reasonable Force

9 October 2026

About This Document

Annual Policy Period	2025 - 2026
Policy Adopted by Governors	September 2018
Last Policy Review	9 October 2026
Next Policy Review	September 2027

History

Version	Date	Name	Description
0.1	Sep 2018	René Esterhuizen, Clerk to Trustees	First release. DRAFT
1.0	Sep 2018	School Governors	Approved and adopted.
1.1	1 Sep 2021	School Governors	Reviewed and approved.
1.3	5 Sep 2022	School Governors	Reviewed and approved.
1.4	21 Aug 2023	School Governors	Reviewed and approved.
1.5	30 Aug 2024	School Governors	Reviewed and approved.
1.6	13 Sep 2025	René Esterhuizen, Headteacher	Reviewed, dates updated.
1.7	9 Oct 2026	René Esterhuizen, Headteacher	Reviewed, updated to come in-line with new KCSIE guidelines.

Contents

1. Introduction 4
2. Definitions 4
3. Who May Use Reasonable Force? 5
4. When Reasonable Force May Be Used 5
5. Minimising The Need For Restrictive Interventions 5
6. Deciding Whether An Intervention Is Appropriate 6
7. Safe and Lawful Use of Reasonable Force 6
8. Seclusion 7
9. Pupils with SEND, Disabilities or Other Vulnerabilities 7
10. Behaviour Support/Positive Handling Plans 8
11. Post-Incident Support and Review 8
12. Recording Incidents 8
13. Seclusion and Restraint 9
14. Reporting to Parents/Carers 9
15. Trustee and Governor Oversight and Use of Data 10
16. Staff Training and Health and Safety 10
17. Safeguarding, Complaints and Allegations 11
Appendix 1: Restrictive Intervention Incident Record 12
Appendix 2: Behaviour Support/Positive Handling Plan 13

1. Introduction

1.1. This policy should be read alongside the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, SEND/Additional Needs Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Complaints Procedure and Procedures for Managing Allegations Against Adults.

1.2. It has regard to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026; the Department for Education guidance Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026); sections 93 and 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006; the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025; the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended; the Equality Act 2010; the Human Rights Act 1998; and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations.

i. Appendix 1 contains a Restrictive Intervention Incident Record.

ii. Appendix 2 contains a Behaviour Support/Positive Handling Plan.

1.3. The school is committed to providing a safe, calm and supportive environment in which pupils are treated with dignity and respect. Restrictive interventions can have a significant impact on pupils, staff and others. The school will therefore seek to minimise their use through prevention, positive relationships, early intervention, reasonable adjustments and effective de-escalation.

1.4. There are circumstances in which the use of a restrictive intervention, including reasonable force or seclusion, may be lawful and necessary to keep a pupil or others safe. Any intervention must be necessary, proportionate to the circumstances, the least restrictive effective response reasonably available, and used for no longer than necessary.

1.5. Restrictive interventions must never be used as punishment, to cause pain, to humiliate a pupil, or simply to secure compliance where there is no lawful justification for the intervention.

2. Definitions

2.1. For the purposes of this policy:

i. Restrictive intervention is an intervention intended to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. It is an umbrella term covering physical and non-physical actions that restrain pupils in different ways.

ii. Reasonable force is physical force which is reasonable in the circumstances. It means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time.

iii. A significant incident of use of force is an incident in which the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff. It includes physical force used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

iv. Restraint is a non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. It may involve direct physical contact, but it may also be non-contact; for example, removing a walking aid.

v. Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention in which a pupil is kept confined in a place away from others and prevented from leaving, whether by physical obstruction, blocking, or by making the pupil believe that they will be punished if they try to leave.

2.2. Appropriate physical contact that does not amount to a significant use of force may include, depending on the circumstances, guiding a pupil safely, comforting a distressed pupil, congratulating or praising a pupil, demonstrating use of equipment, or supporting a pupil during PE or other practical activities.

3. Who May Use Reasonable Force?

3.1. All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in the limited circumstances permitted by section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The power is not dependent on the Headteacher naming or authorising particular members of staff.

3.2. Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions must receive appropriate training in their safe and lawful use and in preventative and de-escalation strategies. The school may identify staff who have received additional specialist training, but this does not remove the legal power of other members of staff to act where reasonable force is lawfully necessary.

4. When Reasonable Force May Be Used

4.1. A member of staff may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent or stop a pupil from:

i. causing injury to themselves or others

ii. committing a criminal offence

iii. damaging property, or

iv. causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

4.2. The decision whether to use reasonable force is a matter of professional judgment and must take account of the individual circumstances. There is no requirement to wait until other strategies have failed where immediate action is necessary. However, where circumstances allow, staff should first use prevention, de-escalation and less restrictive responses.

5. Minimising the Need for Restrictive Interventions

5.1. The school will seek to reduce the likelihood that restrictive interventions are needed by using whole-school and individual approaches, including:

i. maintaining a calm, predictable and supportive school environment

ii. building positive relationships and trust between pupils and staff

iii. using clear, respectful communication, appropriate tone of voice and empathy

iv. identifying triggers, early warning signs and situations in which a pupil may become dysregulated

v. providing pupils with time, space and strategies to regulate and calm

vi. using distraction, diversion, changes of task or environment, and other de-escalation strategies where appropriate

vii. making reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and adapting approaches for pupils with SEND or other vulnerabilities

viii. working closely with pupils, parents/carers and relevant professionals where individual planning is required, and

ix. reviewing incident data to identify patterns and improve practice.

6. Deciding Whether An Intervention Is Appropriate

6.1. Before and during any intervention, staff should consider, so far as circumstances permit:

i. the seriousness and immediacy of the risk

ii. whether a less restrictive effective response is available

iii. the pupil's age, size, understanding, communication needs and ability to respond

iv. any SEND, disability, medical condition, sensory need, mental health difficulty, trauma history or other vulnerability known to the school

v. any behaviour support plan, risk assessment, healthcare plan or reasonable adjustments already in place

vi. the environment and whether moving other pupils or removing hazards would reduce the risk

vii. the safety of the pupil, staff and others, and

viii. whether additional staff support can safely be obtained.

6.2. Where circumstances permit, staff should communicate calmly with the pupil, explain what is happening and why, and give the pupil an opportunity and sufficient time to respond. In an emergency, immediate action may be required.

7. Safe and Lawful Use of Reasonable Force

7.1. Any force used must be reasonable, proportionate and necessary. Staff should use the minimum degree of force required, continually reassess the need for the intervention, and release or reduce the intervention as soon as it is safe to do so.

7.2. The following principles apply:

i. force must not be used as punishment or to deliberately cause pain, injury, fear, humiliation or distress

ii. staff must not use techniques that interfere with a pupil's airway, breathing or circulation

iii. staff must not cover a pupil's mouth or nose or apply pressure to the neck or abdomen

iv. ground restraint carries particular risks and should be avoided. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release or move the pupil to a safer position as quickly as possible

v. staff should avoid pressure on joints and avoid contact with intimate or sensitive areas except where unavoidable and strictly necessary to prevent immediate harm

vi. where possible, another member of staff should be present to assist or witness the incident, but absence of a witness must not prevent necessary action to keep a pupil or others safe, and

vii. staff should continue to monitor the pupil's physical and emotional wellbeing throughout the intervention.

8. Seclusion

8.1. Seclusion is not a disciplinary sanction and must not be used as punishment for deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. It should only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing a high level of emotional or behavioural dysregulation.

8.2. Where seclusion is used:

i. the place used must be safe and must not be threatening or intimidating

ii. the pupil must be supervised at all times

iii. the pupil's physical and emotional wellbeing must be monitored

iv. the pupil must be allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, and

v. the incident must be recorded and reported in accordance with this policy.

8.3. Removal from a classroom or another disciplinary measure is not seclusion where the pupil is not prevented from leaving in the manner described in the definition above. Such measures are dealt with under the Behaviour Policy.

9. Pupils with SEND, Disabilities or Other Vulnerabilities

9.1. When planning for or responding to behaviour involving a pupil with SEND, a disability, medical condition, communication need, sensory impairment, mental health difficulty, trauma history or other vulnerability, staff must take the pupil's individual needs into account and consider the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

9.2. A pupil's disability or additional need may affect how behaviour is expressed, understood and safely managed. Staff should use information from the pupil, parents/carers and relevant professionals to identify triggers, communication methods, sensory or medical considerations, strategies that help the pupil regulate, and interventions that should be avoided.

10. Behaviour Support/Positive Handling Plans

10.1. Where it is foreseeable that a pupil may require restrictive intervention, the school should consider a written Behaviour Support/Positive Handling Plan and an individual risk assessment. The plan should be developed with the pupil, where appropriate, and their parents/carers, and with relevant professionals where necessary.

10.2. The plan should identify, as relevant:

i. known triggers and early warning signs

ii. the pupil's communication, sensory, medical and other individual needs

iii. reasonable adjustments

iv. proactive and preventative strategies

v. de-escalation techniques known to be effective

vi. approaches or interventions known to increase distress or which should be avoided

vii. circumstances in which a restrictive intervention may be necessary

viii. safe strategies to be used by appropriately trained staff

ix. arrangements for summoning support and post-incident care, and

x. arrangements and dates for review.

10.3. The existence of an agreed plan does not itself make a restrictive intervention lawful or appropriate. The circumstances at the time must justify the intervention. Plans should be reviewed periodically and following any significant incident or any seclusion or restraint incident, so that learning can be incorporated and risks reduced.

11. Post-Incident Support and Review

11.1. After an incident, the immediate physical and emotional welfare of the pupil, staff and any other affected pupils must be considered. First aid or medical attention should be arranged where required.

11.2. As soon as appropriate, staff should support the pupil to reflect on what happened in a way that is appropriate to the pupil's age, understanding and communication needs. Staff involved should also have an opportunity to debrief and receive support. Pupils who witnessed a distressing incident should be supported where necessary.

11.3. The school should consider whether any risk assessment, Behaviour Support/Positive Handling Plan, reasonable adjustment, staffing arrangement, environment or training need should be changed as a result of the incident.

12. Recording Incidents

12.1. The Governors and Trustees must ensure that the school has procedures for recording all incidents required by law. These procedures apply even where the use of a restrictive intervention has been agreed with parents/carers as part of a behaviour support plan.

12.2. Significant use of force

i. Every significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable after the incident. The staff member(s) involved should endeavour to complete the record no later than the same day.

12.3. The written record should include, as a minimum:

i. the names of the pupil and staff directly involved
ii. the time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
iii. relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including identified SEND/disability and SEN status where applicable
iv. what led to the incident, including known triggers and relevant events
v. preventative and de-escalation strategies used, where applicable
vi. why the use of force was assessed as necessary
vii. the type and degree of force used
viii. any physical injuries sustained, and
ix. post-incident support, including medical treatment or other support provided.

13. Seclusion and Restraint

13.1. Every seclusion or restraint incident must also be recorded in writing as soon as practicable, with staff endeavouring to complete the record no later than the same day. This includes restraint that does not involve direct physical force, such as removal of a walking aid.

13.2. Where a restraint incident is also a significant use of force, the school does not need to duplicate the same record. The record must nevertheless contain the information required for the significant use of force incident.

14. Reporting to Parents/Carers

14.1. Parents/carers must be informed in writing as soon as practicable after every significant use of force incident and every seclusion or restraint incident. The school should endeavour to provide the information no later than the same day.

14.2. For a significant use of force incident, the report to parents/carers should include at least:

i. the time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
ii. a brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary
iii. a brief account of the type and degree of force used, and
iv. details of any physical injuries sustained.

14.3. For seclusion or restraint incidents, the written information must include sufficient details of the incident, including the time, date, location and approximate duration, why the intervention was considered necessary, and any injuries or post-incident support where applicable.

14.4. The duty to report applies even where the intervention was included in an agreed behaviour support plan.

14.5. Information must not be provided to a parent where it appears that doing so would be likely to result in significant harm to the pupil. In that situation, the information must be provided to any other parent

to whom it can safely be reported. If there is no such parent, the information must be provided to the local authority in whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident.

14.6. Where appropriate, parents/carers should be offered a follow-up discussion to consider triggers, whether agreed plans were followed, the effectiveness of de-escalation strategies and what might be done differently in future.

15. Trustee and Governor Oversight and Use of Data

15.1. The Governors and Trustees must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the school's recording and reporting procedures are followed. The Headteacher will ensure that incident records are monitored and that relevant information is reported to the proprietor/governing body in a way that protects individual confidentiality.

15.2. The school will regularly review incident data to identify patterns and opportunities to improve practice, including:

i. repeated incidents involving particular pupils or settings

ii. common triggers or times/locations associated with incidents

iii. whether preventative or de-escalation strategies are effective

iv. staffing or training needs

v. whether particular interventions are being used repeatedly, and

vi. whether there is any disproportionate use involving pupils with SEND, disabilities, other vulnerabilities or protected characteristics.

16. Staff Training and Health and Safety

16.1. All staff should understand this policy, the legal principles governing reasonable force, the importance of prevention and de-escalation, and the school's recording and reporting procedures. Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions must receive training appropriate to the risks and needs of the school and the pupils they support.

16.2. The school will assess risks to staff health, safety and welfare and will, so far as reasonably practicable, put suitable measures in place, including appropriate training, staffing arrangements and access to support after incidents.

17. Safeguarding, Complaints and Allegations

17.1. Any safeguarding concern arising from an incident must be dealt with in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

17.2. Complaints about the use of restrictive interventions will be dealt with under the school's Complaints Procedure. Where a concern amounts to an allegation that a member of staff may have used force or another restrictive intervention inappropriately, the school's Procedures for Managing Allegations Against Adults will be followed in accordance with KCSIE 2026.

17.3. The fact that an allegation is made does not mean that the use of force was inappropriate. Each case will be considered on its facts, including whether the action was lawful, necessary, reasonable and proportionate.

Appendix 1: Restrictive Intervention Incident Record

Details of pupil on whom force was used by a member of staff (name, class)
Names of staff involved (directly or as witnesses)
Details of other pupils involved (directly or as witnesses) including whether any of the pupils involved were vulnerable for SEN, disability, medical or social reasons.
Description of incident by the staff involved, including any attempt to de-escalate & warnings given that force may be used
Reason for using force and description of force used
Any injury suffered by staff or pupils and any first aid and/or medical attention required
Follow – up, including post incident support and any disciplinary action against pupils
Any information about the incident shared with staff not involved in it & external agencies
When and how those with parental responsibilities were informed about the incident and any views expressed.
Has any complaint been lodged? (should not be recorded here)
Report compiled by: Name/ Role: Signature Date:
Report countersigned by: Name/ Role: Signature Date:

Appendix 2: Behaviour Support/Positive Handling Plan

Positive handling plan for assessing and managing foreseeable risks for children who are likely to need Restrictive Physical Intervention.

Name of child:

Staff member(s):

Name of parents/carers:

Name of Support Service Member/s:

Identification of Risk	
Describe the foreseeable risk (i.e., what specific behaviours have occurred)	
Is the risk potential or actual? (i.e., has the happened before)	
List who is affected by the risk	
Assessment of Risk	
In which situations does the risk occur?	
How likely it is that the risk will arise? (i.e., how often has it happened before)	
If the risk arises, who is likely to be injured or hurt?	
What kinds of injuries or harm are likely to occur?	
How serious are the adverse outcomes?	

Assessment completed by:

Signature: **Date:**

Agreed Positive Handling Plan and Setting Risk Management Strategy		
Focus of Measures	Measures to be employed	Level of risk
Proactive interventions to prevent risk		
Early interventions to manage risks		
Reactive interventions to respond to adverse outcomes		

Agreed by: **Date:**

Parent/carer:

Child – if appropriate:

Supervisor/Manager:

Staff member:

Support Service Member/s:

Communication of Positive Handling Plan and Setting Risk Management Strategy		
Plans and strategies shared with:	Communication Method	Date Actioned

Staff Training Issues		
Identified training needs	Training provided to meet needs	Date Training completed

Evaluation of Positive Handling Plan and Setting Risk Management Strategy		
Measures set out	Effectiveness in supporting the child	Impact on risk
Proactive interventions to prevent risks		
Early interventions to manage risks		
Reactive interventions to respond to adverse outcomes		
Actions for the future		

Plans and strategies evaluated by: **Date:**