Restrictive Interventions Including Use of Reasonable Force Policy

2026- 2027

Wickham Common Primary School are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Staff Responsible:	Head Teacher
Date Reviewed:	March 2026
Date of Next Review:	March 2027

Version Control

Date	Change
January 2025	New policy
March 2026	Throughout policy, positive handling has been changed to Restrictive Interventions including Use of Reasonable Force to be in line with DfE. p. 5 – definitions of restrictive interventions update in line with DfE guidance this includes; restrictive intervention, reasonable force, significant incident, seclusion and restraint. p.5- amendments to when staff can use reasonable force. p.6 use of reasonable force to search pupils added. p.6 other physical contact added p.7. seclusion added p.7 teacher changed to staff member. Procedure added in to include assessment, communication, intervention and post incident. p.8 staff training updated p.9 recording is now recording and reporting. Reporting to parents updated to 'should be in writing'. p.9 added where a Head Teacher has been involved in a Restrictive Intervention and Reasonable force incident another member of SLT or the Executive Head Teacher will review the relevant records

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1. Aims

At Wickham Common there may be children with challenging behavioural difficulties, who present behaviours that may necessitate the use of restrictive physical intervention to prevent injury to themselves, staff and pupils, damage to property, or the breakdown of a safe and calm learning environment.

This policy has been prepared for the support of all staff who come into contact with pupils, and for volunteers working within the school to set out the school's arrangements for restrictive intervention and reasonable force.

The policy is available to parents on request.

The aim of this policy is to ensure a safe and happy environment, where everybody in the school community feels safe and respected.

The objectives of this policy are:

- To provide a safe learning environment;
- To provide a framework in which all staff who come into contact with pupils are clear about their roles and responsibilities within the context of restrictive intervention and reasonable force.
- To support the school's Safeguarding and Behaviour Policies.

2. The Law

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 introduced a statutory right for school staff to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a pupil from:

- committing an offence or engaging in conduct that could be an offence;
- causing injury to themselves or others;
- damaging property;
- prejudicing good order and discipline at the school.

The law applies where the pupil is on school premises or any other place where s/he is in the lawful control or charge of the school staff member. This means that the power extends to school visits.

The Act does not in any way authorise the use of corporal punishment. The law forbids a teacher to use any degree of physical contact that is deliberately intended to punish, or which is primarily intended to cause pain, injury or humiliation.

3. Definitions Used in this Policy

These definitions are taken from: Restrictive Interventions Including Use of Reasonable Force in School December 2025:

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.
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 as described in 'Other physical contact with pupils' within this document. This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

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 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.

Restrictive Intervention and Reasonable force uses the minimum degree of force necessary for the shortest period of time to prevent a pupil harming themselves, others or property.

The DfE Restrictive Interventions Including Use of Reasonable Force states:

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

Schools cannot use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

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.

The guidance states that the use of force should be 'reasonable in the circumstances'.

4. Use of reasonable force to search pupils

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 Trust Safeguarding Policy for detailed advice on searching a pupil.

5. Other physical contact:

Schools should not have a 'no contact' policy.

Schools should not grant any requests by parents or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions. The adoption of a 'no contact' policy at a school can leave staff unable to intervene where reasonable in the circumstances to fully protect pupils. School leaders should adopt sensible policies which allow and support their staff to make appropriate physical contact. There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to have some physical contact with pupils which does not give rise to any question over the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions.

This will depend on the circumstance, but examples of occasions when physical contact is generally appropriate include:
• to give first aid
• to guide or escort pupils, such as holding the hand of a pupil at the front/back of the line when going to assembly, when walking together around the school or on a school trip, or when helping a pupil to a space they have chosen to access to self regulate
• to comfort a distressed pupil
• to congratulate or praise a pupil, for example a pat on the back or a handshake
• to demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
• to demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in a given situation, the member of staff should use their judgement and have regard to:
• the school's child protection (or any other relevant) policy
• the applicable circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present
• the individual pupil's age
• any other material factors, including but not limited to whether:
  - the pupil has SEND or other vulnerabilities
  - any alternative strategies that do not include physical contact can be used

6. 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 to this policy.
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Seclusion, as defined in this guidance, is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. There are disciplinary measures that are similar, such as removal from the classroom.

Schools should record the following details as a minimum:

• names of pupil and staff directly involved
• time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
• any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code
• brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
• details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
• any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

Parents must be informed as soon as practicable after the incident and schools should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

7. Procedures

The decision on whether to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and usually based on a dynamic risk assessment. Whether the force used is reasonable will always depend on the particular circumstances of the case. The use of force is reasonable if it is proportionate to the consequences it is intended to prevent. This means the degree of force used should be no more than is needed to achieve the desired result.

Staff have a responsibility to follow this policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for physical intervention. Reasonable force will only be used as a last resort when all other behaviour management/ de-escalation strategies have failed or when pupils, staff or property are at risk.

Assessment:

- Evaluate the situation and risk level.
- Consider alternative de-escalation techniques.
- Assess the pupil's individual needs and history.

Communication:

- Clearly communicate with the pupil, explaining what will happen if the behaviour continues.
- Use calm, non-threatening language.
- Engage with the pupil to understand the cause of their behaviour.

Intervention:

- Use the least intrusive method to achieve the desired outcome.
- Ensure another staff member is present if possible.
- Monitor the pupil's physical and emotional response throughout.

Post-Incident:

- Allow time for the pupil to calm down in a safe environment.
- When the pupil had had adequate time to regulate, discuss the incident with the pupil to reflect on the behaviour and consequences.
- Complete an incident report detailing the event.
- Inform parents and work with them to update any positive behaviour plans.

De-escalation strategies may include:

- Verbal advice and support- including ways to change the situation
- Choices/consequences
- Using diversion & diffusion
- Sensory input- including quiet space, a drink
- Using negotiation
- Time out offered
- Re-assurance
- Planned ignoring
- Humour

8. Training

Physical restraint is an available option, only to be used when other means of dealing with the situation have failed. Staff are made aware of this policy and have training on child protection that will ensure they are aware of their duties and the law.

Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions should be adequately trained in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies. Training will ensure that the chosen training reflects the principles of the DfE guidance .
Employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees. Therefore, schools should 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.

Staff are trained in proactive and de-escalation techniques Key staff have training in Restrictive Intervention and Reasonable force methods of restraint and intervention from PRICE.

Appendix 2 details the restrictive techniques that staff are trained to use.

9. Recording and reporting

Where physical control or restraint has been used a record of the incident must be kept (appendix 1)

An incident form needs to be completed within 24 hrs after the incident. If more than one member of staff was involved, they should create an individual record rather than collaborate on one.

Parents will always be informed if their child has been involved in an incident which has required physical intervention. Schools **should** communicate this information to parents in writing. For example, via email or online messaging system.

A report of the incident made to parents must include the following details as a minimum:
- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
- brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force
- details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable the requirement to report applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

A Health and Safety Accident/Incident Form will be completed in situations where injury has occurred to either members of staff or pupils.

Staff and children will be given basic first aid treatment for any injuries that require treatment. Where staff and pupils have been involved in an incident involving reasonable force, they should have access to emotional support.

Debriefing must take place as soon as possible after the incident has been dealt with.

10. Monitoring Incidents

All handling records are reviewed by the Head Teacher. Each review will consider whether the handling incident was avoidable and whether measures can be put in place to avoid handling in future. Where a Head Teacher has been involved in a Restrictive Intervention and Reasonable force incident another member of SLT or the Executive Head Teacher will review the relevant records.

11. Positive Behaviour Plans

If we become aware that a pupil is likely to present with challenging behaviour that may require the use of reasonable force, we will plan how to respond if the situation arises. A positive behaviour plan:

- Provides a structured intervention to manage pupil behaviour
- Is designed to support the pupil to self-regulate and manage their own behaviours
- Can serve as an individual risk assessment to reduce the likelihood of fight, flight or freeze behaviour leading to the need for restrictive intervention and reasonable force.

A Positive Behaviour Plan includes:

- The target behaviours causing concern
- The triggers for this behaviour
- Strategies to support self-regulation

All members of staff working with the pupil need to be involved in the development of the plan and parents need to be involved as early as possible when their child's behaviour is a cause for concern. The Positive Behaviour Plan should be discussed with the pupil where appropriate.

12. Complaints

Use of physical force that is unwarranted, excessive, or punitive is not acceptable. Failure to comply with this principle when considering or using physical force should be dealt with under school disciplinary procedures.

Appendix 1. Behaviour Incident Requiring Handling Report Form

Pupil Information	
Name	
Class/ Year	
Date	
Time	
Location	

Details of person completing form	
Name	
Position	

Context
Description of behavioural incident including any triggers/antecedents Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

Description of Proactive/ De-escalation strategies tried

What do you believe would have happened without physical intervention?

What behaviour was the child presenting that warranted physical Intervention/restraint? (tick)			
Risk of injury to self or others		Risk of significant damage to property	
Risk of criminal offence		Severe disruption to pupils/dignity	
Restrictive Intervention Handling Technique used (please tick all that apply)			
Double hand restraint		Secure Cup Restraint	
Straight Arm Restraint		Seated Position	
Leg restriction A		Leg Restriction B	
Kneeling position		Bean Bag restraint	
The methods above are the only acceptable methods of restraint other than in an extreme emergency to prevent loss of life etc. Where other handling (not restraint) has been used for example, back touch used or arm lightly touched to guide, please describe it below.			

Names of Staff involved in Physical Intervention	

Was anyone injured? If so, please provide details of injury and treatment

Name of member of staff who checked the pupil for injuries after physical intervention

Incident Debrief – What was the probable cause/function of behaviour? (please tick)					
Sensory		Escape		Attention	
Tangible		Social			
Any learning for staff team? How could physical intervention be improved/avoided in future?					
Please specify any other recording procedures used (please tick)					
Accident book record		Accident form		Safeguarding Concern form	

Pupil Voice (where appropriate) Continue on Separate sheet as necessary

Parent/Carer informed by (please tick)					
Telephone		Contact book		Face to face contact	

Signature:		**Date:**	
Name: (please print)			
Head Teacher /SLT Signature:		**Date:**	
Name: (Please print)			

Appendix 2: Restrictive Techniques Used

PRICE restraint techniques focus on safe, ethical interventions based on Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) to minimize restrictive practices. Key methods include low-arousal approaches, 1–4 person holding, and breakaway techniques for staff safety. These are used only as a last resort, prioritizing safety and dignity.

Core Restraint Techniques

- **Low Arousal Techniques:** Calm, non-physical approaches to reduce tension before needing physical intervention.
- **Breakaway Techniques:** Specific methods designed to allow staff to safely release themselves from someone holding them.
- **Holding Techniques:** Approved physical techniques involving 1, 2, 3, or 4 people to safely restrict movement, designed for standing, sitting, or floor-based scenarios
- **Escort Techniques:** Used for moving individuals, such as the front or rear arm wrap, where hands are placed on the wrist and above the elbow.

Safe Practice Components

- **Preventative Strategies:** Focus on reducing the need for restraint through proactive, trauma-informed care.
- **Risk Management:** Physical restraint is treated as a high-risk intervention used only to prevent significant harm.
- **Post-Incident Analysis:** Techniques such as the "Life Space Interview" are used to review incidents with the individual, allowing them to express feelings and reducing future occurrences.