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# Reasonable Force and Restrictive Interventions Policy

**Responsibility for approval:** Executive Team

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## 1.0 Aims of Policy

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidelines on the use of reasonable force and restrictive intervention by staff members to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils, staff, and visitors within the school environment. The policy aims to create a safe and supportive learning environment while respecting the rights and dignity of all individuals. This policy applies to all staff members, including teachers, co-professionals, support staff, and any other individuals authorised to supervise pupils within the school premises or during school related activities.

## 2.0 Terminology

- 2.1 Some For clarity, this policy will use the following definitions:

- **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. 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.
- Please note- as with the interchangeable terminology noted above, references to reasonable force within the rest of this policy also apply to the terms restrictive interventions and restraint.

## 3.0 Who Can Use Reasonable Force

- 3.1 All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances to:
- Prevent injury to the pupil or others
  - Prevent a criminal offence
  - Prevent serious damage to property
  - Maintain good order and discipline among pupils
- 3.2 Reasonable force should only be used in the above circumstances and when all other strategies including verbal de-escalation have been exhausted.

## 4.0 Guiding principles

- 4.1 The decision on whether it is reasonable to use force and/or other restrictive interventions, depends on the individual circumstances of each situation. In assessing whether force and/or other restrictive interventions are reasonable in a situation, the member of staff should use their professional judgement. Factors staff might want to consider include but are not limited to are listed below.

- 4.2 **Necessary:** The decision on whether it is reasonable to use force and/or other restrictive interventions, depends on the individual circumstances of each situation. In assessing whether force and/or other restrictive interventions are reasonable in a situation, the member of staff should use their professional judgement. Factors staff might want to consider include but are not limited to are listed below.
- 4.3 **Proportionate:** Staff will use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce the relevant risks. Staff will 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.
- 4.4 **Pupil's welfare:** Staff will 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 reasonable force and other restrictive interventions particularly distressing. Staff will 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 will clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why it is happening, 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 will be used to ensure the pupil understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond. Staff will seek to understand how the pupil is feeling and use this information to determine whether the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

## 5.0 Application

- 5.1 Using reasonable force in a school setting involves careful consideration of various factors to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils and staff. The key practical considerations are listed below.
- 5.2 **Assessment of the Situation**
- Immediacy of threat: evaluate whether the situation poses an immediate threat to the safety of pupils, staff, or property.
  - Severity of the threat: identify whether the threat involves physical harm, significant disruption, or damage to property.
  - De-escalation attempts: ensure that all non-physical de-escalation techniques have been attempted and proven ineffective before resorting to physical force.
  - Reasonable adjustments: follow all relevant guidance from pupil passport/risk assessment
- 5.3 **Proportionality and Necessity**
- Minimum force: use the least amount of force necessary to control the situation.
  - Duration: apply force for the shortest possible time to achieve the desired outcome.
  - Proportionate response: ensure that the level of force used is proportionate to the severity of the threat.
- 5.4 **Training and Preparedness**
- Staff Training: ensure all staff members are aware and have an understanding of the use of reasonable force and restrictive intervention policy and principles. All relevant staff will have enhanced training.
  - Refresher courses: provide regular refresher training to maintain staff competence in handling such situations.

### 5.5 Physical and Emotional Safety

- Avoiding harm: take care to avoid causing unnecessary pain or injury to the pupil.
- Emotional support: be mindful of the emotional impact on the pupil and provide support following the incident.

### 5.6 Legal and Ethical Considerations

- School policies: adhere to the school's policies and procedures regarding the use of force.
- Rights and dignity: respect the rights and dignity of the pupil at all times.

### 5.7 Documentation and Reporting

- Incident reporting: document the incident in detail, including the circumstances leading up to the use of force, the actions taken, and the outcomes.
- Parental notification: inform the pupil's parents or guardians about the incident as soon as possible.
- Review and follow-up: participate in a review of the incident to identify any lessons learned and to plan any necessary follow-up actions, such as counselling or additional support for the pupil.

### 5.8 Debriefing and Support

- Debriefing sessions: conduct debriefing sessions with the staff involved and the pupil to discuss the incident and address any ongoing concerns.
- Support services: provide access to support services for both staff and pupils affected by the incident, including counselling if necessary.

### 5.9 Environmental Considerations

- Safe environment: ensure that the environment where the force is used is as safe as possible, minimising the risk of accidental injury (e.g., removing obstacles that could cause tripping or falling).
- Witnesses: when possible, have another staff member present as a witness to the intervention.

### 5.10 Communication

- Clear instructions: communicate clearly with the pupil throughout the intervention, explaining why the force is being used and what is expected of them.
- Calm demeanour: maintain a calm and controlled demeanour to help de-escalate the situation and reassure the pupil.

## 6.0 Schools should not have a 'no contact' policy

- 6.1 Schools must not grant requests from parents or staff to opt out of the use of reasonable force or restrictive interventions. Instead, school leaders should implement sensible policies that support staff in making appropriate physical contact.
- 6.2 Staff should use professional judgment to determine when contact is appropriate, considering the school's child protection policy, the presence of other adults, the pupil's age, and any SEND or vulnerabilities. Alternative non-physical strategies should always be considered first.
- 6.3 Examples of appropriate physical contact that do not constitute restrictive intervention include:
  - Safety and Care: Administering first aid or comforting a distressed pupil.
  - Guidance: Holding a hand to guide a pupil in line, on trips, or to a self-regulation space.
  - Instruction: Demonstrating musical instruments or PE techniques/exercises.
  - Praise: Offering a handshake to congratulate a pupil.
- 6.4 By allowing these interactions, schools ensure staff can maintain a safe, supportive environment while fulfilling their duty of care without fear of using reasonable force inappropriately.

## 7.0 Use of reasonable force to search pupils

- 7.1 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. The decision to use reasonable force should be made on a case-by-case basis. Staff should refer to the [Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools guidance document](#) for detailed advice on searching a pupil.

## 8.0 Unacceptable uses of force

- 8.1 School staff will never use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment. Pupils will never be deliberately 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 will release their holds or re-position into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible. Where needed, the pupil should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible.

## 9.0 Reporting and Recording

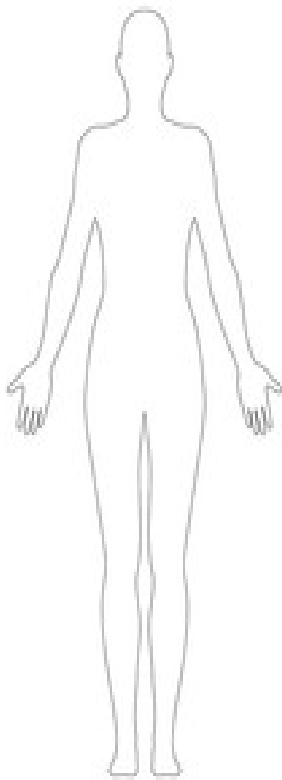
- 9.1 Governing bodies of maintained schools and the proprietors of other schools must ensure that a procedure is in place for recording each significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil, as part of the school's duty under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- 9.2 Incidents must be recorded by the staff member(s) involved as soon as possible after the event and must be made in writing on CPOMS using the category Reasonable Force. If staff do not have access to CPOMS the form below can be used and uploaded.
- 9.3 The requirement to record applies even if the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

## 10.0 Complaints

- 10.1 If any complaints are raised regarding reasonable for or restrictive interventions the matter will be investigated using our complaints process. The school will initiate the investigation as soon as possible and report any findings back through the appropriate channels.

## 11.0 Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix A - Recording and Reporting the Use of Reasonable Force by Staff

|                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Date of Incident:</b>                                                                                              | <b>Time of Incident:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Location of Incident:</b>                    |
| <b>Pupil (s) Involved - Name (s):</b>                                                                                 | <b>Year Group:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Specific Needs of the Pupil(s) involved:</b> |
| <b>Staff Members Involved – Name (s):</b>                                                                             | <b>Staff member recording the incident – Name:</b><br><br><b>Role within the incident (circle) – witness / person using reasonable force</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                 |
| <b>Body map indicator:</b><br><br> | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Details of the incident:</b><br><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Length of time intervention was used</b><br><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Brief account of the incident – including what led to the incident</b><br><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Identified potential triggers (if known)</b><br><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Any preventative / de-escalation strategies used</b><br><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Type and degree of reasonable force used- Please tick box and detail contact/restraint used:</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Guided support</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Low-level restriction</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Medium-level restriction</b><br><input type="checkbox"/> <b>High-level restriction</b> |                                                 |

|                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Any physical injuries sustained (if applicable) and to who – state none if this is the case. |
| Decision making / assessment of why the use of force was necessary:                              |                                                                                                                       |
| Was the possible use of reasonable force explained to the pupil in advance of using it?          |                                                                                                                       |
| Was there a need for any post incident support for the pupil or staff? If so, detail this below: |                                                                                                                       |
| When and how were parents notified of the incident and by who:                                   |                                                                                                                       |
| Detail any follow up action / learning below. E.g. risk assessment / safety plan / safe place    |                                                                                                                       |
| Signed (Staff Member):<br><br>Date:                                                              |                                                                                                                       |
| Signed (Headteacher):<br><br>Date:                                                               |                                                                                                                       |
| LADO informed:<br><br>Outcome:                                                                   |                                                                                                                       |