

Church Hill C of E Junior School

'Let Your Light Shine' (Matthew 5:16)



Together Everyone Achieves More

Positive Handling Policy 2026

Signed by: 

Date:/7.15.26..

Approved by Governor

Date:07/05/26.....

Signed on behalf of the Governing body: 

Next Review Date: January 2028

Please also refer to Child Protection, Whistleblowing, Behaviour, SEND and Equality policies

Relevant legislation

The principal legislation to which this guidance relates are:

- the Education and Inspections Act 2006, especially sections 93 and 93A
- the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations
- the Human Rights Act 1998 • the Equality Act 2010

At Church Hill C of E Junior School, we are committed to a positive behaviour policy which encourages children to make positive behaviour choices (see Pupil Behaviour Policy). We do however recognise that children sometimes do make the wrong choices. On rare occasions this may result in a situation that requires some form of restrictive intervention by staff. The use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, can have a significant impact on the pupils, staff members and parents involved, as well as the wider classroom. However, there are times when the use of restrictive interventions will be lawful and necessary; for example, to keep individuals and the wider school community safe. Our policy for positive handling is based upon the following principles:-

- Restrictive intervention should be used only as a last resort when other appropriate strategies have failed.
- Any physical contact should be only the minimum required.
- Restrictive intervention must be used in ways that maintain the safety and dignity of all concerned.
- Incidents must be recorded and reported to the Head Teacher as soon as possible, on the same day and a written record kept in the bound and numbered book.
- Parents will be informed of each incident in writing on the same day

The Legal Framework

Section 93 of the Education & Inspections Act 2006 gives clear guidance on the circumstances for the reasonable use of force.

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

At Church Hill C of E Junior School, 7 members of staff have completed training in positive handling (team teach training).

What is a restrictive Intervention?

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.

The various restrictive interventions above have been defined for completeness and should not be construed as an endorsement or otherwise for their use in schools. Some will not be relevant to most schools.

What is appropriate physical contact which is not considered a restrictive intervention?

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
- If a child may injure themselves, staff can place a protective hand near or around the child's head to prevent harm.

Our approach

We aim to avoid the need for restrictive intervention and regard this as a last resort in a tiny minority of situations. We always aim to deal with behaviour using a positive approach and therefore this policy should be read in connection with our Behaviour Policy.

It is not possible to define every circumstance in which physical restraint would be necessary or appropriate and staff will have to exercise their own judgement in situations which arise within the above categories. Staff should always act within the school's policy on behaviour and discipline, particularly in dealing with disruptive behaviour.

Staff should be aware that when they are in charge of children during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are acting in loco parentis and have a 'Duty of Care' to all children they are in charge of. They must, therefore, take reasonable action to ensure all pupils' safety and well-being. Staff are not expected to place themselves in situations where they are likely to suffer injury as a result of their intervention.

Use of reasonable force

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.

Physical restrictive interventions should be applied as an act of care and control with the intention or re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allow the pupil to regain self-control. It should never take a form which could be seen as punishment.

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 using team teach training.

Determining when use of restrictive interventions is appropriate:

There will be times when school staff may need to use restrictive interventions, and they should know this option may be available to them. The decision on whether it is reasonable to use a restrictive intervention depends on the individual circumstances of each situation. To make this assessment, the member of staff should consider the following:

Is it necessary?

- Staff should consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation.
- Staff should assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks, or whether its use would escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself.
- Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.

Is it proportionate?

- Staff should use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce the relevant risks.
- If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy.
- Staff should 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 2010.14

Have you considered the pupil's welfare?

- Staff should 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 restrictive interventions particularly distressing.

- Staff should 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 should clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, 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 should be used to ensure the pupil understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.
- Staff should seek to understand how the pupil is feeling and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

This list of factors is not exhaustive, and staff should also take into account other relevant considerations. Training on the use of restrictive interventions should equip staff to judge when it is appropriate to use restrictive interventions, including in situations where quick decisions are needed. It should also help staff understand how to assess whether their response is reasonable under pressure. If an assessment has been made to use restrictive interventions, staff should be supported in their decision making.

DO

- Tell the pupil what you are doing and why
- Use the minimum force necessary
- Involve another member of staff if possible
- Tell the pupil what s/he must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition)
- Use simple and clear language
- Relax your restraint in response to the pupil's compliance

DON'T

- Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil
- Involve other pupils in the restraint
- Touch or hold the pupil in a way that could be viewed as sexually inappropriate conduct
- Twist or force limbs back against a joint
- Bend fingers or pull hair
- Hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around the neck Slap, punch, kick or trip up the pupil.
- Use physical restraint or intervention as a punishment

Consideration for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

Some children and young people with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Triggers may include pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar situations or environments or feelings of fear and anxiety. In particular, pupils who are non-verbal or find verbal communication challenging may express their needs, discomfort or confusion through actions. This can lead to pupils with SEND being disproportionately subject to the use of restrictive interventions.

Schools should seek to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour so that they can provide proactive support, create an inclusive environment and consider the impact of school policies on pupils with SEND. For example, schools should consider how the school culture and environment may be experienced differently by pupils with SEND and seek to support pupils to cope with situations that they may find distressing.

Schools should utilise staff who know individual pupils well to help identify and manage risk such as trigger points when challenging behaviour is more likely to occur, and develop proactive strategies to reduce the likelihood of restrictive interventions being used. They should also work with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

Depending on the circumstances, examples of strategies may include:

- removing stimuli that may be causing distress
- changing body language, facial expression, and/or tone of voice
- supporting the pupil to express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- engaging the pupil in an activity which can help them manage their feelings of anxiety
- distracting the pupil in something that interests them or by introducing familiar objects and activities to redirect their attention

Where appropriate, school staff should work with pupils with SEND and their parents in the co-production of any necessary behaviour support plans. Behaviour support plans should outline any adjustments, such as to address aspects of the school environment which the pupil finds challenging and ways for pupils to communicate their needs effectively. Behaviour support plans should detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil. This should be discussed in conjunction with the relevant people, such as teachers, parents, the pupil, pastoral staff or health professionals, and parameters around its use stated clearly in the plan.

Where there is an identified risk, such as increased likelihood in the need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions, schools must have risk assessments in place and where possible, mitigate risks such as through training and prevention strategies.

Whether the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate will depend on the circumstances, irrespective of whether it has been considered as part of a behaviour support plan. Any behaviour support plans should be reviewed with the pupil and their parent periodically and following any significant incident, so that changes can be made based on evidence of what has worked and what has not worked in practice for the individual pupil.

Where a pupil has a disability, the school has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to take reasonable steps to avoid disadvantage so that the pupil can fully participate in the education provided by the school, and that they can enjoy the other benefits, facilities and services that the school provides for pupils.

Actions after an incident

Physical restraint often occurs in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for the staff involved and the pupil. The head teacher should be informed of any incident as soon as possible on the same day and will take responsibility for making arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised. An appropriate member of the teaching staff should always be involved in debriefing the pupil involved and any victims of or witnesses to the incident should be offered support, and their parents informed.

If the behaviour is part of an on-going pattern it may be necessary to address the situation through the development of an Individual Behavioural Plan, which may include an anger management programme, positive handling plan or other strategies agreed by the SENCO. A risk assessment must be developed. This may require additional support from other services. It is also helpful to consider the circumstances precipitating the incident to explore ways in which future incidents can be avoided.

All members of staff are aware of the regulations regarding the use of reasonable force by staff, as set out in the document; Restrictive Interventions, Including Use of Reasonable Force, in Schools (April 2026).

Any incident of restraint, reasonable force, restrictive intervention or seclusion will be recorded on the same day. This will be recorded in the 'Bound and Numbered Book' which is kept in the office, using the template in appendix A. In line with GDPR records will be kept for 75 years after the birth of the child. Parents will be informed as soon as practicable when any incident of restraint, reasonable force, restrictive intervention or seclusion has been used on their child on the same day in writing using the template letter in Appendix B. Parents should also be invited in to discuss the incident with a member of the senior leadership team to discuss the following:

- any behavioural triggers or warning signs of an impending incident
- whether any agreed behaviour support plans were followed
- what de-escalation strategies were used and how effective they were
- what might be done differently in the future
- Review the risk assessments and behaviour plans.

In the event of any future complaint or allegation this record will provide essential and accurate information.

A copy should be filed in the child's appropriate file and in a central school file in order to inform individual and school risk assessments.

Risk Assessments

If we become aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, we will plan how to respond if the situation arises. Such planning will address:

- Strategies to be used prior to intervention. Ways of avoiding 'triggers' if these are known
- Involvement of parents to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might need to take
- Briefing of staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training or guidance)
- Identification of additional support that can be summoned if appropriate
- The school's duty of care to all pupils and staff

Complaints and Allegations

This policy, adhered to by all staff and shared with parents, should help to avoid complaints from parents. It is unlikely to prevent all complaints, however, and a dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation, either under the complaints, disciplinary or allegation management procedures.

Appendix A



Restrictive Interventions Reporting Form



Church Hill C of E Junior School

Name of pupil: _____

Name of staff involved: _____

Pupil Needs including SEND: _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

Approximate duration of the intervention: _____

Account of the Incident: _____

Potential Triggers: _____

De-escalation strategies used: _____

What intervention was used: _____

Any physical injuries sustained and by whom: _____

Why the intervention necessary: _____

Post-incident Support/medical treatment: _____

When parents notified: _____

Changes to SEND arrangements/risk assessment _____

Appendix B

Dear **[Parent/Carer Name]**,

I am writing to inform you of a **significant incident involving the use of a restrictive intervention** with your child, **[Child's Name]**, which took place on **[Date]** at **[Time]**. As required under the **Department for Education's statutory guidance (effective 1 April 2026)**, schools must notify parents **as soon as practicable**, on the same day, following any incident where significant force or restrictive intervention has been used.

A restrictive intervention was used because staff judged it necessary to prevent:

- **Injury to your child or others,**
- **Serious damage to property,**
- **Committing a criminal offence or**
- **Serious disorder or risk of harm.**

Description of the incident [clear and factual]

The intervention used was: **[Type of restrictive intervention]**

It lasted for: **[Duration]**

Before the intervention, staff attempted the following de-escalation strategies:

- **[List strategies attempted]**

Following the incident,

To support your child moving forward, the school will:

We understand such incidents can be worrying for families. You met with **[Name/Role]** on **[Date]**, however, we are more than happy to meet with you again to discuss this further if required.

Your views are important to us, and we want to ensure your child feels safe, supported, and understood in school.

