



Restrictive Interventions Policy

Including Use of Reasonable Force

This policy has been adopted by Pathfinder Multi Academy Trust and is applicable across all schools that make up the Trust. In line with the MAT's Scheme of Delegation, this Policy must be duly applied by each Local Governing Committee and the Headteacher of each school in Pathfinder Multi Academy Trust.

Where there are specific details or any discretions in the policy that apply to an individual school or Local Governing Committee this has been made clear within the wording of the policy.

This policy will be reviewed in line with the agreed timetable for policy review or sooner as events or legislation changes require.

Date Adopted: **April 2026**

Date for Review: **April 2027**

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2025-2026 - This is the first version of this policy.

PART 1: Policy Principles

1 Introduction and Aims

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. (DfE, Use of Reasonable Force and Other Restrictive Force, 2026)

This policy aims to help schools proactively minimise the need to use restrictive interventions through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies, and when necessary, to help school staff feel more confident in knowing how to use these interventions safely, appropriately and lawfully.

2 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

3 Definitions

Term	Definition
Restrictive intervention	A means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This policy 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.

4 Who can apply the use of reasonable force

All members of school staff have a 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 the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

**damaging of property: the damage to property which may result in the physical harm of the student or those students in the building.*

5 Use of reasonable force to search pupils

Head teachers and staff they authorise to do so 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:

- Knives, blades or other weapons as set out in section 139 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988
- an offensive weapon, within the meaning of the Prevention of Crime Act 1953;
- alcohol, within the meaning of section 191 of the Licensing Act 2003;
- a controlled drug, within the meaning of section 2 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, which section 5(1) of that Act makes it unlawful for a person to have in possession; (to include tobacco or smoking related products).

A member of staff can use such force as is reasonable to search for the aforementioned legally prohibited items, but not to search for items banned under the school rules only.

Staff should refer to the Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools guidance document for detailed advice on searching a pupil.

6 Unacceptable uses of force

It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of 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.

7 Contact

Schools within the Trust should not have a 'no contact' policy. Additionally, schools should not grant any requests by parents or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions.

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.

Other material factors that the school should consider, include but are not limited to whether:

- The pupil has SEND or other vulnerabilities.
- Any alternative strategies that do not include physical contact can be used.

8 Training requirements

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.

Each school within the Trust should make decisions on training based on their school's individual contexts and needs. When deciding what formal staff training is

required, school leaders should ensure that the chosen training reflects the principles of this policy

Employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees.

Therefore, a risk assessment should be conducted 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.

9 Seclusion

Seclusion 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 and the following should apply:

- 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 place to which the pupil is confined should not be locked.
- 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 with the procedures outlined in the section on 'Recording and reporting duties'.

10 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. The School will 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.

A pupil with Send who displays challenging behaviour must have a plan that:

- Identifies environmental factors which may be experienced differently by the pupil.
- Helps 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 required.

Where a pupil has a disability, schools have a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010 to support pupils with reasonable adjustments, making sure they can benefit

from what the school's offer and giving pupils time, space and strategies to calm down before their behaviour escalates.

Whole school strategies should be considered and should include 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 approaches can include:
- Working closely with parents to support individual pupils.
- Strategies to support individual pupils based on their identified needs, including the development of behaviour support plans.
- Training and outreach recommendations (examples, but not limited to, are: Team Teach, Trust's inclusion outreach, specialist teaching team).

11 Behaviour Support Plans

A small number of students may need a Behaviour Support Plan. A plan should detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil. The following principles should be applied to a plan:

- 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.
- 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.

PART 2: Process Overview

STAGE	ACTIONS
Determination: Is it necessary?	- Are there any other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation? - 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?	- 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?	- Consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. - 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.
Reporting and recording injuries (see reporting and recording duties guidance)	- Medical assessment and treatment for any injuries should be actioned as soon as possible. - Incidents in which a member of staff uses reasonable force or seclusion on a pupil must be recorded as described in 'Recording and reporting duties' in this document. - Any injuries should be recorded in accordance with the school's procedures and reported as appropriate to the Health and Safety Executive. - Parents should be notified as soon as possible and this should be followed by an emailed copy of the incident.

	Read receipt emails are recommended. All recordings, both on the incident log and any electronic systems (CPOMS) should remain factual and avoid emotive, subjective or opinion.
Follow up student conversations	Schools should also hold a follow-up conversation(s) to facilitate reflection, learning and to support pupil and staff wellbeing with students. This conversation should be framed as part of the overall debriefing process and look to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from both the staff and students involved, as well as to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue. This process should ideally be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident and may also benefit from the presence of an additional person to ensure impartiality and support. In some cases, it may be more appropriate for a parent to work with a school to allow the collection of student voice/viewpoint. Follow up conversations (and/or supervision) should also be offered to all staff involved in the incident.
Evaluation stage	Schools should evaluate all incidents involving the use of restrictive intervention as soon as practicable after the event to understand: - why it was used - the impact on pupils and staff - any patterns and trends - how the use of restrictive interventions might be avoided in future, for example by amending or introducing a behaviour support plan. Good practice can involve the collection of parental comments and evaluations at this stage.

Recording the use of force:

The Trust and any schools within the Trust will follow the recording process outlined below:

- Incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event.
- Incidents will be recorded by the staff member(s) involved and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.
- Records will be made even when the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

The details included in a record must include:

- Names of pupil and staff directly involved.
- 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.
- Time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention.

- Brief account of the incident, including what led up to the incident, identified or potential triggers if known, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used, and (where relevant) what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of any physical injuries sustained.
- Brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance.
- Any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts. Schools may also wish to record additional details to support their evaluation of incidents to identify best practices and areas for improvement.

Reporting the use of force

A school within the Trust should report to the parents of the pupil involved as soon as practicable after the incident, and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

Exceptions to the requirement to report are where:

- the pupil is aged 20 or over; or
- it appears to the staff member that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil.

In this instance, the staff member must report the incident to any parent(s) who it can be reported to without resulting in significant harm or, if there are none, to the local authority within whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident. A report of the incident made to parents should 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

Schools should communicate this information to parents in writing. For example, via email or online messaging system.

Recording and reporting the use of seclusion and non-force related restraint

Incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event. It should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

The following procedure should be completed:

- A record of any such incident is made in writing as soon as practicable after the incident.
- The requirement to record applies even if the use of seclusion or restraint in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.
- 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.
- A copy of the written record of the seclusion or restraint incident is shared to parents.

Exceptions to the requirement to report are where:

- The pupil is aged 20 or over; or 17
- It appears to the staff member that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. In this instance, the staff member must report the incident to any parent(s) who it can be reported to without resulting in significant harm or, if there are none, to the local authority within whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident.

Evaluation and Review process

Each school's governing body (LGC) and Trust leaders should regularly review and interrogate data on restrictive interventions to ensure school leaders:

- Identify and implement improvements to policies and practices, particularly where approaches have been used for some time but have not been effective.
- Identify areas of learning and development for school staff, supporting specific departments and teachers to improve understanding and practice.
- Understand pupils' repeat patterns and triggers to interrogate the effectiveness of pupil support measures, share this information with teachers who work with those pupils to better support them and, where appropriate, their parents, to establish a behaviour support plan or revise an existing plan.
- Identify any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to pupils who share protected characteristics, have SEN, or other types of vulnerability.

Raising a complaint or allegation

Any complaints regarding the use of restrictive interventions should be dealt with in accordance with the school's complaints procedure. If an allegation regarding inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions is made against a member of staff, the procedures in Keeping Children Safe in Education should be followed. This includes the provisions regarding suspension of staff.

Guidance

This policy has been reviewed in line with further government guidance:

- Behaviour in Schools guidance
- Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Interventions (Equality Act 2010): advice for schools
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools guidance

- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mobile Phones in Schools guidance

Appendix 1- Restraint Record



Restraint Record

SCHOOL				
NAME OF YOUNG PERSON				
POTENTIAL CONTEXTUAL BARRIER?	SEND	EAL	OTHER:	
LOCATION OF INCIDENT			DATE AND START TIME OF INCIDENT	
NAMES OF STAFF INVOLVED				
REASON FORCE WAS DEEMED NECESSARY	DE-ESCALATION STRATEGIES USED			
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 *damaging of property: the damage to property which would result in the physical harm of the student or those students in the building.	☐ Behaviour/Support Plan followed ☐ Low- arousal body language ☐ Active listening ☐ Verbal instructions ☐ Environment adjustment ☐ Change of adult ☐ Reassurance ☐ Humour ☐ Negotiation			
DURATION OF RESTRAINT <i>Time period</i>		ADAPTATIONS MADE DUE TO POTENTIAL BARRIER?	☐ SEND Plan ☐ Pupil Support Plan	
INJURIES SUSTAINED? Where logged? Who notified?	☐ CPOM ☐ BeSafe ☐ Parents/Carers ☐ Relative (in case of serious adult injury) ☐ Police ☐ Ambulance (999)			
MEDICAL CHECK COMPLETE? Who? When?				

[illegible]

FOLLOW UP (have the parents been contacted? How has this been done?)

FOLLOW UP (Incident reviewed with young person?)

EVALUATION AND REFLECTION (How can we prevent this happening again? What adaptations are required?)

Appendix 2- Seclusion Record



Seclusion Record

SCHOOL				
NAME OF YOUNG PERSON				
POTENTIAL CONTEXTUAL BARRIER?	SEND	EAL	OTHER:	
LOCATION OF INCIDENT THAT TRIGGERED SECLUSION			DATE AND START TIME OF INCIDENT	
NAMES OF STAFF INVOLVED				
REASON SECLUSION WAS DEEMED NECESSARY	DE-ESCALATION STRATEGIES USED			
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 *damaging of property: the damage to property which would result in the physical harm of the student or those students in the building.	☐ Low-arousal body language ☐ Active listening ☐ Verbal instructions ☐ Environment adjustment ☐ Change of adult ☐ Reassurance ☐ Humour ☐ Negotiation			
DURATION OF SECLUSION <i>Time period</i>		ADAPTATIONS MADE DUE TO POTENTIAL BARRIER?	☐ SEND Plan ☐ Pupil Support Plan	
IF INJURIES SUSTAINED DURING SECLUSION, WHERE HAVE THEY BEEN LOGGED? <i>Who notified?</i>	☐ CPOM ☐ BeSafe ☐ Parents and/or carers ☐ Relative (in case of serious adult injury) ☐ Police ☐ Ambulance (999) ☐ No injuries ☐ Social Worker/LADO			
MEDICAL CHECK COMPLETE? <i>Who? When?</i>	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not required ☐			

DSL INFORMED ?	☐ Yes ☐ No	FORM LOGGED ON CPOMS?	☐ Yes ☐ No	EXTERNAL AGENCIES INFORMED?	☐ Yes ☐ No
POST INCIDENT SUPPORT OFFERED? <i>Provide a brief overview</i>			☐ Young Person ☐ Adults/staff		
DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT					
Environment and Triggers: <i>What led up to the incident? Please record chronologically and factually.</i> <i>What happened during the incident?</i>					
Select/add the behaviour during the incident					
☐ Verbal	☐ Disruption to learning	☐ Refusal to cooperate	☐ Assault	☐ Disruption to environment	☐ Bullying/ racism
☐ Hair grab	☐ Neck grab	☐ Clothing grab	☐ Body holds	☐ Arm grab	☐ Weapon /missiles
☐ Slap	☐ Punch	☐ Bite/ scratch	☐ Spit	☐ Kick	☐ Other (please specify)
WHO WAS AT RISK?					

FOLLOW UP (have the parents/carers been contacted? How has this been done?)

FOLLOW UP (Incident reviewed with young person?)

EVALUATION AND REFLECTION (How can we prevent this happening again? What adaptations are required?)

Appendix 3- Checklist

STAGE	ACTIONS	Y
Determination Is it necessary ?	- Are there any other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation? - 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. (eg. evacuation, lockdown)	
Is it proportionate ?	- 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 the Equality Act 2010.¹⁴	
Have you considered the pupil's welfare ?	- Consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. - 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.	
Reporting and recording injuries (see reporting and recording duties guidance)	- Medical assessment and treatment for any injuries should be actioned as soon as possible. - Incidents in which a member of staff uses reasonable force or seclusion on a pupil must be recorded as described in 'Recording and reporting duties' in this document. - Any injuries should be recorded in accordance with the school's procedures and reported as appropriate to the Health and Safety Executive. - Parents should be notified as soon as possible and this should be followed by an emailed copy of the incident. Read receipt emails is recommended. - All recordings, both on the incident log and any electronic systems (CPOMS) should remain factual and avoid emotive, subjective or opinion.	
Follow up student conversations	- Schools should also hold a follow-up conversation(s) to facilitate reflection, learning and to support pupil and staff wellbeing with students. - This conversation should be framed as part of the overall debriefing process and look to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from both the staff and students involved, as well as to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue. - This process should ideally be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident and may also benefit from the presence of an additional person to ensure impartiality and support. In some cases, it may be more appropriate for a parent to work with a school to allow the collection of student voice/viewpoint. - Follow up conversations (and/or supervision) should also be offered to all staff involved in the incident.	
Evaluation stage	Schools should evaluate all incidents involving the use of restrictive intervention as soon as practicable after the event to understand: - why it was used - the impact on pupils and staff - any patterns and trends - how the use of restrictive interventions might be avoided in future, for example by amending or introducing a behaviour support plan. Good practice can involve the collection of parental comments and evaluations at this stage.	