



Restrictive interventions Policy

Including Use of Reasonable Force, Physical Contact
and Seclusion

Applies to	All schools and nursery settings within Everychild Partnership Trust
Statutory basis	Education and Inspections Act 2006 (ss.93, 93A); Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025; Equality Act 2010; Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974; Human Rights Act 1998
DfE guidance	Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026) – replaces Use of Reasonable Force (2013)
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Policy owner	Director of Education
Approved by	Chief Executive

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1. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out Everychild Partnership Trust's approach to restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, physical contact, restraint and seclusion, across all schools and nursery settings within the Trust.

It applies to all staff employed or contracted by the Trust (including teachers, teaching assistants, early years practitioners, cover staff and volunteers) whenever they are working with children and young people on or off site.

The policy aims to:

- protect every pupil from harm, including from unnecessary, inappropriate or disproportionate physical intervention
- protect staff who take reasonable action in good faith to keep pupils and others safe
- ensure consistent, lawful and rights-respecting practice across every setting in the Trust
- proactively minimise the need to use restrictive interventions through prevention, early support and de-escalation
- meet the Trust's statutory duties under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025 and all related legislation

2. Definitions

The following definitions are drawn from the DfE guidance Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026):

Restrictive intervention: Any means used to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This is the umbrella term covering both physical and non-physical actions.

Reasonable force: A legal term for physical restrictive interventions. It means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time. All school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances.

Significant incident: Any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between staff and pupils. Statutory recording and reporting duties apply.

Restraint: A non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement, with or without direct physical contact (e.g. holding a pupil's arms to their sides or removing a pupil's crutches).

Seclusion: A non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and preventing them from leaving – by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave. Seclusion is not a disciplinary measure and must not be used as punishment for deliberate misbehaviour.

Note: these definitions are provided for completeness. Some will not be relevant to most of our settings. Their inclusion should not be read as an endorsement of their use.

3. Our Commitment and Guiding Principles

Everychild Partnership Trust is committed to creating safe, nurturing environments in which all children and young people thrive. We believe that:

- Every pupil has the right to be treated with dignity, care and respect at all times, including when their behaviour is challenging.
- Restrictive interventions should always be a last resort. Prevention, relationship-building and de-escalation must come first.
- No restrictive intervention should ever be used as punishment. The use of force for the purpose of punishment is illegal.
- Physical contact, used appropriately, is a normal and healthy part of working with children. Schools must not operate a blanket 'no contact' policy.
- Staff who act in good faith, using reasonable and proportionate force, will be fully supported by the Trust.
- Parents are partners. They should be informed promptly when a restrictive intervention has been used involving their child.
- Disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to pupils with protected characteristics, SEN or other vulnerabilities will not be tolerated.
- Our approach reflects the values in our Trust ethos: Respect, Compassion, Courage, Responsibility.

4. Legal Framework

This policy is grounded in the following legislation and guidance:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, ss.93 and 93A – power to use reasonable force; statutory duty to record and report
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Education Act 1996, s.550ZA – power of school staff to use force
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 – employer duty to protect staff and pupils
- Human Rights Act 1998 – in particular, Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) and Article 5 (right to liberty and security)
- Equality Act 2010 – reasonable adjustments; prohibition of disability discrimination; public sector equality duty
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991
- DfE: Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026) – this replaces the 2013 Use of Reasonable Force guidance
- DfE: Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition)
- DfE: Behaviour in Schools (current edition)
- *Surrey County Council: Touch and the Use of Restrictive Physical Intervention when Working with Children and Young People*

Use of the terms 'must' and 'should': Throughout this policy, 'must' indicates a legal requirement. 'Should' indicates strong guidance that should be followed unless there is good reason not to.

5. Positive Physical Contact (Non-Restrictive)

Appropriate physical contact is a normal part of working with children and young people. Schools and nursery settings within the Trust must not adopt a 'no contact' policy. Equally, schools must not agree to requests by parents or staff members that reasonable force or other restrictive interventions will never be used.

Examples of physical contact that is generally appropriate include:

- Giving first aid
- Guiding or escorting a pupil, such as holding a hand at the front or back of a line, walking together around school or on a trip, or helping a pupil to a space they have chosen to access to self-regulate
- Comforting a distressed pupil
- Congratulating or praising a pupil (e.g. a pat on the back or a handshake)
- Demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE or sports coaching
- Demonstrating how to use a musical instrument
- Intimate care and toileting support for younger children or pupils with relevant needs, in accordance with individual care plans

When deciding whether physical contact is appropriate, staff should use professional judgement and consider:

- The school's child protection and safeguarding policies
- Whether other adults are present
- The individual pupil's age and stage of development
- Whether the pupil has SEND, sensory sensitivities, a history of trauma or other vulnerabilities
- Any cultural or individual sensitivities to touch
- Whether the pupil has verbally or non-verbally indicated they are not comfortable with contact
- Whether alternative strategies that do not involve physical contact could be used

Physical contact should never be secretive or conducted in any way that could be considered indecent or a misuse of authority. Where possible, staff should ensure they are visible to others.

6. Prevention, De-escalation and Whole-School Approaches

The Trust expects every setting to place prevention and de-escalation at the heart of its behaviour culture. Proactive, whole-school and individual approaches reduce the likelihood that restrictive interventions will ever be needed.

6.1 Whole-school and whole-setting measures

- Carefully designed environments that support all pupils to feel safe, regulated and ready to learn
- Consistent, positive behaviour management frameworks that are applied fairly and equitably

- Training staff in effective communication strategies, including appropriate tone of voice, empathy, active listening and trauma-informed approaches
- Building strong, trusting staff–pupil relationships so that pupils feel known and valued
- Teaching pupils age-appropriate strategies for recognising and managing their own emotions
- Sharing best practice for managing communal spaces such as corridors, dining halls and playgrounds
- Regular analysis of behaviour data, including data on the use of restrictive interventions, to identify trends and inform improvements

6.2 Individual approaches

- Working closely with parents to understand each child’s needs, triggers and effective strategies
- Developing individual Behaviour Support Plans (BSPs) or Individual Regulation Plans (IRPs) where a child is at elevated risk of needing a restrictive intervention
- Identifying known or likely triggers and putting proactive strategies in place
- Giving pupils time, space and strategies to calm down before behaviour escalates
- Involving pupils in co-producing strategies that work for them
- Making reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities or SEND

6.3 De-escalation in the moment

Before using any restrictive intervention, staff must consider de-escalation strategies, including:

- Remaining calm and using a quiet, non-threatening tone of voice
- Creating physical space to reduce the pupil’s sense of threat
- Using non-confrontational body language
- Removing audiences where possible
- Removing or reducing stimuli that may be causing distress
- Offering the pupil a calm-down space or a distraction activity
- Using familiar objects or activities to redirect attention
- Allowing the pupil adequate time to process instructions, particularly where there are communication needs

7. When Restrictive Interventions May Be Used

7.1 Who can use reasonable force?

All members of school and nursery staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in the following 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

Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force should be adequately trained. Headteachers may also authorise staff to use force when searching pupils for legally prohibited items.

7.2 The decision to intervene – is it necessary and proportionate?

The decision whether to use a restrictive intervention depends on the circumstances of each situation. Staff must consider:

Is it necessary?

- Are there less restrictive ways to manage the situation?
- Is the intervention likely to reduce the risk, or might it escalate the situation or cause more harm than the behaviour itself?
- Can other staff members be consulted about broader risks in the environment?

Is it proportionate?

- Use the least amount of force, the least restrictive intervention, for the shortest time necessary.
- If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, stop and try an alternative approach.
- Consider the pupil's age, size, medical conditions, SEND, and any relevant equality implications.

Is the pupil's welfare protected?

- Consider the impact on the pupil's overall wellbeing – past trauma, communication difficulties, sensory impairments, undiagnosed needs.
- Seek to maintain the pupil's dignity – consider the location, including whether the intervention occurs in front of peers.
- Communicate calmly and clearly with the pupil: what is happening, why, and what they need to do. Use verbal and non-verbal strategies for pupils with communication needs.
- • Understand how the pupil is feeling and use this to judge whether to continue, reduce or stop the intervention.

7.3 Physical handling – how to intervene safely

When physical handling is necessary, staff should apply the following principles:

- Use the minimum force necessary to maintain safety
- Apply the intervention for the shortest time possible
- Maintain a calm, gentle but firm approach throughout
- Use side-by-side positioning where possible; avoid close head-to-head contact (risk of head-butting)
- Never restrict the pupil's ability to breathe – do not cover the mouth or nose, apply pressure to the neck, abdomen or chest
- Avoid applying force on the ground; if a pupil is unintentionally brought to the ground, staff must release holds and return to a standing or seated position as quickly as safely possible
- Hold only by the 'long bones' (arms and legs) – not at joints, where pain and injury are more likely
- Avoid lifting a pupil unless absolutely necessary
- Talk to the pupil throughout; reassure them; explain what is happening and why

- For pupils with disabilities, only use techniques that have been agreed through appropriate planning and, where relevant, specialist training (e.g. accredited programmes from the British Institute of Learning Disabilities, BILD)

8. Unacceptable Uses of Force – Absolute Prohibitions

The following are strictly prohibited and may constitute a criminal offence:

- Using force as punishment - this is illegal in all circumstances
- Any form of corporal punishment
- Restraining a pupil in a way that restricts their airway, breathing or circulation
- Applying pressure to the neck, nose, mouth, chest or abdomen
- Physical contact that is aggressive, sexualised, humiliating or invasive
- Contact with sensitive body parts including breasts, genitalia or buttocks, except where required as part of a documented intimate care plan
- Applying pressure to joints in ways that may cause pain or injury
- Developing habitual or exclusive physical contact with a particular child
- Leaving a pupil unsupervised in seclusion

Any member of staff who breaches these prohibitions will be subject to the Trust's disciplinary procedures and may be referred to the Police and/or the Teaching Regulation Agency.

9. Seclusion

Seclusion is defined as keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and preventing them from leaving. It is a non-disciplinary intervention. It should only ever be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation and is not acting with intent.

Seclusion must never be:

- Used as a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour
- Implemented through threat of punishment
- Used in a space that feels threatening or intimidating to the pupil

When seclusion is used:

- The space must be safe
- The pupil must be supervised at all times
- The pupil must be allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk of harm to others has reduced
- The incident must be recorded and parents informed on the same day (see Section 16)

Note: disciplinary measures such as removal from the classroom, time-out rooms used for disciplinary purposes, or internal exclusion are different from seclusion. Refer to the Trust's Behaviour Policy for guidance on these measures.

10. Pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)

The Trust recognises that pupils with SEND are disproportionately subject to the use of restrictive interventions. Settings must take proactive steps to understand and address the underlying reasons for this.

Pupils with SEND may display challenging behaviour as a response to pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar environments, anxiety or communication difficulties. Staff must not interpret such behaviour as deliberate defiance before considering these factors.

10.1 Proactive approaches

- Understand and document individual triggers
- Consider how the school culture, routines and environment may be experienced differently by pupils with SEND
- Use staff who know the pupil well to help identify and manage risk
- Work with the pupil, parents and other professionals (e.g. educational psychologists, occupational therapists) to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies
- Make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010

10.2 De-escalation strategies for pupils with SEND

- Remove stimuli that may be causing distress
- Modify body language, facial expression and tone of voice
- Support the pupil to express emotions before becoming overwhelmed
- Engage the pupil in an activity that helps them manage anxiety
- Introduce familiar objects or activities to redirect attention
- Use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) where verbal communication is difficult

10.3 Behaviour Support Plans for pupils with SEND

Where a pupil with SEND has an identified risk of requiring physical intervention, a Behaviour Support Plan (BSP) must be developed in collaboration with:

- The pupil (where possible and appropriate)
- Their parents
- The SENCO
- Relevant teaching and pastoral staff
- Health or other professionals as appropriate

The BSP must clearly state:

- Known triggers and warning signs
- Agreed de-escalation strategies
- Any circumstances where increased physical contact may be appropriate, with parameters clearly described
- Reasonable adjustments to the school environment or routines
- How the pupil can communicate their needs effectively

BSPs must be reviewed with the pupil and parents periodically and following any significant incident. The requirement to record and report each significant incident applies even where use of force has been agreed in a BSP.

11. Individual Risk Assessments and Behaviour Support Plans

Where a pupil is known to be at risk of behaviour that may require a restrictive intervention, a risk assessment and Behaviour Support Plan (BSP) or Individual Regulation Plan (IRP) must be in place before such an incident occurs where practicable.

The plan must address:

- The known triggers and warning signs for that child
- De-escalation strategies to be tried first
- The specific approach (including physical holds if applicable) to be used and by whom, if an intervention becomes necessary
- How additional support can be summoned
- Medical or health factors to be considered (e.g. heart conditions, epilepsy, sensory sensitivities)
- How and when parents should be informed

Plans must be:

- Developed in consultation with the pupil's parents and, where appropriate, the pupil themselves
- Shared with all relevant staff
- Reviewed regularly and after every significant incident
- Signed by parents

For nursery settings, equivalent planning must be embedded within the child's care plan or support documentation, in line with the EYFS framework.

12. Training

Headteachers and setting managers are responsible for ensuring that staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions receive adequate training in:

- The legal framework and this policy
- Safeguarding and child protection
- Prevention and de-escalation strategies
- Safe physical intervention techniques (where required by role) from an accredited provider
- Positive behaviour management
- Trauma-informed and attachment-aware practice
- Intimate care procedures (where relevant)
- Manual handling (where relevant)

All new staff must receive induction training that includes this policy. Refresher training must be provided at appropriate intervals and whenever this policy is significantly updated.

Training must reflect the principles of the DfE guidance and be delivered by a reputable provider. For pupils with learning disabilities or complex needs, accredited training should be used where relevant.

No member of staff should be expected to use positive handling techniques without having received appropriate training first.

13. Post-Incident Support and Debriefing

Following any significant incident, the school or setting must:

13.1 Immediate actions

- Ensure the pupil and any staff member involved receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible
- Record any injuries in accordance with school procedures and report to the Health and Safety Executive as required
- Record the incident and notify parents on the same day where practicable (see Sections 14-16)

13.2 Debrief

A structured debrief should take place as soon as practicable. This should ideally be facilitated by a member of staff not involved in the incident, and should:

- Allow both the staff member(s) and the pupil to give their separate account of what happened
- Explore the triggers, what de-escalation was attempted and why the intervention was used
- Focus on repairing and rebuilding the relationship between staff and pupil
- Identify learning and any changes to behaviour support plans
- Be impartial and supportive in tone

13.3 Ongoing support

- Monitor pupil and staff wellbeing following the incident and provide additional support if needed (e.g. counselling, further conversations)
- Provide appropriate support to any pupil who witnessed the incident if they were distressed
- Use the debrief to inform a review of the BSP or IRP where applicable

14. Recording the Use of Force (Statutory Guidance)

This section is statutory guidance under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Governing bodies and proprietors must have regard to it.

Governing bodies of maintained schools and 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.

Timing: Incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event. The staff member(s) involved should endeavour to complete the record no later than the same day.

Records must be made in writing. The requirement applies even where the use of restrictive interventions has been agreed with parents in a behaviour support plan.

The record must include as a minimum:

- Names of the pupil and staff member(s) directly involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether they have an identified SEND and their SEN status code
- Time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- A brief account of the incident, including what led up to it, identified or potential triggers, any prevention or de-escalation strategies used, the type of reasonable force applied, the degree of force, and any injuries sustained
- Why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance
- Any post-incident support provided, including medical treatment

Settings may also wish to record:

- The pupil's and/or witnesses' account of what happened
- When and how parents were notified and the outcome of that conversation
- What follow-up actions have been taken

All significant incidents must be logged on CPOMS (or the setting's equivalent system). The Headteacher/setting manager and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must be notified.

15. Reporting to Parents (Statutory Guidance)

This section is statutory guidance under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Governing bodies and proprietors must have regard to it.

Governing bodies and proprietors must ensure a procedure is in place for reporting each significant use of force to the parents of the pupil involved as soon as practicable after the incident, and no later than the same day.

Exceptions: If reporting would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil, the staff member must report to any parent(s) where reporting would not result in harm, or (if there are none) to the relevant local authority.

The report to parents must include as a minimum:

- Time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- Why the intervention was assessed as necessary
- The type of force applied and the degree of force
- Details of any physical injuries sustained

This information must be communicated to parents in writing (e.g. by email, letter or secure online messaging). Settings should invite parents to a follow-up discussion where appropriate, covering:

- Behavioural triggers or warning signs
- Whether agreed behaviour support plan strategies were followed
- What de-escalation was tried and how effective it was
- What might be done differently in future

Parents are asked to sign a copy of the incident record. The record is retained on the child's file.

16. Recording and Reporting Seclusion and Restraint

Under the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025, governing bodies and proprietors must ensure procedures are in place for recording each incident of seclusion or restraint, including restraint incidents that occur without direct physical contact (e.g. removal of a walking aid).

Records must include as a minimum:

- Names of the pupil and staff member(s) directly involved
- Time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- Any relevant SEND needs or circumstances of the pupil
- Why the intervention was assessed as necessary
- Any injuries sustained and post-incident support provided

Parents must be informed as soon as practicable after the incident, and no later than the same day.

Where a restraint incident also constitutes a significant use of force, settings only need to follow the Section 15 reporting procedure. The same information does not need to be reported twice. However, restraint incidents without direct physical contact that do not constitute a significant incident of use of force must be reported separately under this section.

17. Governance: Use of Data

Governing bodies and the Trust Board must take all reasonable steps to ensure that recording and reporting procedures are complied with.

Governing bodies should regularly review data on the use of restrictive interventions to:

- Identify and implement improvements to policies and practices, particularly where approaches have been used over time without being effective
- Identify staff learning and development needs
- Understand individual pupils' patterns and triggers, and interrogate the effectiveness of support measures
- Identify any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to pupils with protected characteristics, SEND or other vulnerabilities

The Trust will collate and review anonymised data across settings at least annually, as part of its safeguarding and behaviour oversight functions. Analysis should be proportionate and avoid over-interpreting data from small pupil groups.

18. Complaints and Allegations

Complaints regarding the use of restrictive interventions should be dealt with in accordance with each setting's normal complaints procedure.

If an allegation of inappropriate use of force or other restrictive intervention is made against a member of staff, the procedures in Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition) must be followed, including provisions regarding suspension of staff. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) must be notified as appropriate.

Staff who act in good faith and in accordance with this policy will be fully supported by the Trust. This includes access to welfare support and legal advice where necessary.

19. Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Equality and Inclusion Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- SEND Policy and Information Report
- Whistle-blowing Policy
- DfE Behaviour in Schools guidance
- DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools guidance
- DfE Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance

20. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required by changes in legislation, statutory guidance or Trust practice. The next scheduled review is April 2027.

Each school and nursery setting must adopt this Trust policy. Settings may add a local appendix to reflect specific context (for example, the names of trained staff, setting-specific procedures or links to local authority guidance) provided any additions are consistent with and do not weaken this policy.

21. Appendix A: Summary Quick-Reference for Staff

This summary does not replace the full policy. All staff must read and understand the complete document.

You CAN...	You MUST NOT...
Use appropriate physical contact - guide, comfort, congratulate, give first aid	Use force as punishment - this is illegal
Use reasonable force to prevent injury, a criminal offence, damage to property or disorder - when necessary and proportionate	Restrict a pupil's breathing or apply pressure to their neck, chest or abdomen
De-escalate first - always try other strategies before using force	Use force in a way that is aggressive, sexualised, humiliating or degrading
Use the minimum force for the shortest time	Leave a pupil alone during seclusion
Record every significant incident on the same day on CPOMS	Use corporal punishment in any form
Inform parents on the same day	Operate a blanket 'no contact' policy
Seek help and debrief after any significant incident	Ignore injuries – ensure medical assessment where needed

22. Appendix B: Incident Record Checklist

Use this checklist to ensure all statutory information is captured when recording a significant incident.

1. Names of pupil and staff member(s) directly involved
2. Any SEND or other relevant needs of the pupil (including SEN status code)
3. Time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
4. Account of what happened, including: what led up to the incident; identified triggers; de-escalation strategies attempted; type of force used; degree of force; any injuries
5. Why force was assessed as necessary in this instance
6. Post-incident support provided (e.g. medical treatment, welfare check)
7. Pupil's account (recorded separately where possible)
8. When and how parents were notified and their response
9. Follow-up actions agreed
10. Staff member's signature and date
11. Headteacher/DSL signature and date

23. Appendix C: Policy Version History

Version	Date	Summary of changes
1.0	April 2026	<p>New Trust-wide policy, aligned to DfE April 2026 guidance (replaces individual school policies). Incorporates statutory recording and reporting duties under s.93A EIA 2006 and Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025.</p> <p>This replaces all previous versions, including those held at school level.</p>