

Brighton Hill Community School

RESTRICTIVE PHYSICAL INTERVENTION POLICY

REVIEW DATE:

SPRING 2026

NEXT REVIEW DATE:

SPRING 2027

1. Introduction

At Brighton Hill we believe that pupils need to be safe, know how to behave, and know that the adults around them are able to manage them safely and confidently. For a very small minority of pupils the use of restrictive physical intervention may be needed, and, on such occasions, acceptable forms of intervention will be used.

The majority of pupils behave well and conform to the expectations of our school. We have responsibility to operate an effective behaviour policy that encompasses preventative strategies for tackling inappropriate behaviour in relation to the whole school, each class, and individual pupils.

All the school staff need to feel able to manage inappropriate risk and behaviour, and to understand what and how challenging behaviours might be communicated. They need to know what the options open to them are, and they need to be free of undue worries about the risks of legal action against them if they use appropriate **restrictive** physical intervention. Parents need to know that their children are safe with us, and they need to be properly informed if their child is the subject of Restrictive Physical Intervention, including the nature of the intervention, and the rationale for its use.

This policy is based on the DfE's guidance 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools' (December 2025), which comes into effect on 1 April 2026.

2. Definition of “Restrictive Physical Intervention” and “Seclusion”

The Law allows for teachers and other persons authorised by the Headteacher to use Restrictive Physical Intervention to prevent a pupil from doing or continuing to do any of the following:-

- Committing a criminal offence
- Injuring themselves or others
- Causing damage to property
- Engaging in any behaviour that is prejudicial to maintain the good order and discipline at the school

“Restrictive Physical Intervention” is the term used by the DfE to include interventions where bodily contact using force is used. It refers to any instance in which a teacher or other adult authorised by the Head teacher has to, in specific circumstances, use “reasonable force” to control or restrain pupils. There is legal definition of “reasonable force”. However, there are two relevant considerations:

- The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of an incident warrant it
- The degree of force must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or consequences it is intended to prevent

The definition of physical force also includes the use of mechanical devices (e.g. splints on the pupil prescribed by medical colleagues to prevent self-injury), forcible seclusion or use of locked doors. It is important for staff to note that, although no physical contact may be made in the latter situation, this is still regarded as a Restrictive Physical Intervention.

Definition of Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and preventing from leaving. An example of seclusion is where a pupil is placed alone in a room from which they are prevented from leaving by physical means (such as a locked or held door) or by other means (such as being placed in a room with others who prevent them from leaving). Staff should only put a pupil in seclusion to protect others from harm, when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. Seclusion must not be used as a disciplinary sanction or response to wilful misbehaviour. There are disciplinary measures that are similar, such as removal from the classroom (please refer to the school Behaviour Policy).

The place to which the pupil is confined should be safe and not feel threatening or intimidating to the pupil. The pupil should be supervised at all times during the period of seclusion. When the immediate risk of harm is 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 within this policy.

3. When the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention may be appropriate

Restrictive Physical Intervention will be used when all other strategies have failed, and therefore only as a last resort. However, there are other situations when physical management may be necessary, for example in a situation of clear danger or extreme urgency. Certain pupils may become distressed, agitated, and out of control, and need calming with a brief Restrictive Physical Intervention that is un-resisted after a few seconds.

The safety and well-being of all staff and pupils are important considerations. Under certain conditions this duty must be an over-riding factor.

Before staff use any restrictive intervention, they should assess whether it is necessary and proportionate, and consider the pupil's welfare. Staff should consider:

- If it's necessary: there might be alternative ways to manage the situation.
- If it's proportionate: staff should use the least restrictive intervention for the least amount of time.
- The pupil's welfare: including the impact on pupils who have experienced adverse life events, and maintaining respect for their dignity.

4. Planning for the use of Restrictive Physical Interventions:

Staff will use the minimum force needed to restore safety and appropriate behaviour.

The principles relating to intervention are as follows:-

- Restrictive Physical Intervention is an act of care and control, not punishment. It is never used to force compliance with staff instructions.
- Staff will only use it when there are good grounds for believing that immediate action is necessary and, in the pupils, and/or other pupil's best interests.
- Staff will take steps in advance to avoid the need for Restrictive Physical Intervention through dialogue and diversion and at the level of understanding of the child or young person.
- Only the minimum force necessary will be used to prevent severe distress, injury, or damage.
- Staff will be able to show that the intervention used was in keeping with the incident.
- Every effort will be made to secure the presence of other staff, and these staff may act as assistants and/or witnesses
- As soon as it is safe, the Restrictive Physical Intervention will be relaxed to allow the pupil to regain self-control.
- A distinction will be maintained between the use of a one-off intervention which is appropriate to a particular circumstance, and the using of it repeatedly as a regular feature of school policy
- Escalation will be avoided at all costs, especially if it would make the overall situation more destructive and unmanageable
- The age, understanding, and competence of the individual pupil will always be considered
- In developing Individual Education/ Behaviour plans, consideration will be given to approaches appropriate to each pupil's circumstance
- Procedures are in place, through the pastoral system of the school, for supporting and debriefing pupils and staff after every incident of Restrictive Physical Intervention, as it is essential to safeguard the emotional well-being of all involved at these times.

5. Acceptable forms of intervention

There are occasions when staff will have cause to have physical contact with pupils for a variety of reasons, for example:

- To comfort a pupil in distress (so long as this is appropriate to their age)
- To gently direct a pupil
- For curricular reasons (for example in PE, Drama etc)
- In an emergency to avert danger to the pupil or pupils
- In rare circumstance, when Restrictive Physical Intervention is warranted

Staff should take particular account of age and developmental stage when considering physical contact. In Early Years and infant settings, routine physical contact is a normal and

necessary part of care. For example, providing comfort, supporting personal care, or guiding children during activities. For some children, physical intervention to ensure safety may include lifting or carrying. Staff should use their professional judgement about what is proportionate and appropriate for the child's age, size, and level of understanding.

Physical intervention can take several forms. It might involve staff in the following appropriate actions:

- Guiding; using body positioning and positive gestures to move a student away from harm. This may include the placing of a hand on the back (between the shoulder blades) and using reasonable force to actively move them from one place to another.
- Blocking or Interposing; placing yourself between the student and their objective (e.g. exit, another student) thereby preventing the potential injury damage or prejudice to good order.
- Hold and Escort; holding the student appropriately (e.g. by the upper arm) to prevent them from injury, damage, etc. In cases of resistance from a student, it may be necessary to employ holding to effectively achieve shepherding and, hence you are actively leading them away.
- Restraining; used only in the most extreme cases, restraining may require a significant amount of force in order to prevent significant injury (as described in the policy). Essentially, restraining is a more extreme version of holding, may require more than one adult and may last significantly longer than other strategies. However, the same care must be taken to restrain a student appropriately.

In all situations where physical contact between staff and pupils takes place, staff must consider the following:

- The pupil's age and level of understanding (or development in EYFS)
- The pupil's individual characteristics and history
- The location where the contact takes place (it should not take place in private without others present)

It will not become a habit between a member of staff and a particular pupil.

6. Inappropriate Use of Physical Intervention

Physical contact is never made as a punishment, or to inflict pain. All forms of corporal punishment are prohibited. Physical contact will not be made with the participants neck, breasts, abdomen, genital area, other sensitive body parts, or to put pressure on joints.

Pupils must not be restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation. For example, by covering the nose or mouth or applying pressure to the neck or abdomen. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff must release them or re-position into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.

Physical interventions must never be employed in anger or frustration. If you find yourself angry or frustrated by the situation at hand you must step back and allow someone else to manage the issue. It is never appropriate to use physical intervention strategies as a punishment. Just as there are a number of acceptable intervention strategies, there are also a number of actions it is completely inappropriate to take.

Inappropriate actions include;

- Hitting or striking; while it is entirely possible that in the course of an intervention (e.g. breaking up a fight) you may be hit yourself, you must not strike a student.
- Deliberately inflicting pain; it is not okay to twist limbs or put pressure on joints (e.g. arm up a student's back), pull or hold hair, pinch or hold a student in a pain inducing way (e.g. by the ear).
- Making contact with sexually sensitive areas of the body; where at all possible contact should be restricted to arms, shoulders and the back as previously described.
- Restricting breathing; by holding round the throat or for a prolonged period around the chest. It is also never appropriate to sit on/straddle a student or hold them face down to the floor.

We recognise that there may be some children within our school who find physical contact in general particularly unwelcome due to their culture/religious context or disability. There may be others for whom such contact is troubling as a result of their personal history, in particular of abuse. A risk assessment may be carried out by a senior member of staff where there is cause for concern about a student.

7. Developing a Positive Handling Plan

If a pupil is identified for whom it is felt that Restrictive Physical Intervention is likely, then a Positive Handling Plan will be completed. This plan will help the pupil and staff to avoid difficult situations through understanding the factors that influence the behaviour and identifying the early warning signs that indicate foreseeable behaviours that may be developing.

The plan will include:

- Involving parents/carers and pupils to ensure they are clear about what specific action the school may take, when and why
- A risk assessment to ensure staff and others act reasonably, consider the risks, and learn from what happens
- A **record** needs to be kept in school of risk reduction options that have been examined and discounted, as well as those used
- Managing the pupil, strategies to de-escalate a conflict, and stating at which point a Restrictive Physical Intervention is to be used
- Identifying key staff who know exactly what is expected. It is best that these staff are well known to the pupil
- Ensuring a system to summon additional support
- Identifying training needs

8. Pupils with SEND

Restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, can be used on pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Where a pupil's behaviour means that it is more likely that staff will need to use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions, the school

must have a risk assessment in place. School leaders must also work to manage and reduce the risk – for example, by understanding the pupil's triggers and providing staff training.

Schools have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities. When planning for and using restrictive interventions with pupils with SEND, staff should consider what adjustments may be appropriate. For example, adapting de-escalation techniques, allowing additional time, or taking account of sensory sensitivities.

Where appropriate, the school should also work with the pupil, their parents/carers, and other professionals to develop:

- Prevention and de-escalation strategies.
- A behaviour plan that sets out prevention strategies and the types of physical interventions that will be used.

9. Power to search without consent

In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described above, headteachers and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for the following “prohibited items”:

- knives and weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- stolen items
- tobacco and cigarette papers
- fireworks
- pornographic images
- any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property.

Force can be used to search a pupil for a prohibited item, but not to search for an item banned only under the school rules. For example, force could be used to search for illegal drugs or a weapon, but not for a mobile phone.

10. Guidance & Training for Staff

Guidance and training is essential in this area. We need to adopt the best possible practice. In Brighton Hill this is arranged at a number of levels including:

- Awareness of governors, staff and parents
- Behaviour management for all staff
- Managing conflict in challenging situations – all staff
- Specific training on Restrictive Physical Intervention techniques – all staff

The DfE recommends that staff who are likely to need to use restrictive interventions (including reasonable force) should be adequately trained to do so safely and lawfully, and trained in strategies to prevent the need to use reasonable force.

11. Reporting and Recording

From 1 April 2026, the school has a statutory duty to record and report all significant incidents in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil, and any incidents where a member of staff uses seclusion or restraint on a pupil.

If physical intervention occurs the incident must be recorded using a Physical Intervention Report using the appropriate category in CPOMS on the same day (ideally as soon as possible after the event).

As a minimum, the following details must be recorded:

- The names of the pupil(s) and staff involved.
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including if the pupil has SEND and their SEN code.
- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention.
- Details of any physical injuries.
- Any support provided after the incident, including any medical treatment for injuries.
- The type of reasonable force and the degree of force that was used.
- A brief account of the incident, including what led up to it, any known triggers, and any preventative or de-escalation strategies used.
- A brief account of why the staff member(s) assessed that it was necessary to use force or the intervention.

12. Reporting to Parents/Carers

The school does not require parental consent to use reasonable force on a pupil. School leaders must give a written report of the incident to each of the pupil's parents/carers on the same day, even if the use of force or restrictive intervention has been agreed as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

The written report to parents/carers must include at least:

- Time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention.
- A brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary.
- A brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force.
- Details of any physical injuries and any post-incident support.

Reports must not include identifying details of any other pupil, as this would be a breach of data protection law.

The school does not have to report an incident to the parents/carers if telling the parents/carers would likely cause significant harm to the pupil (including any form of abuse or neglect). In these cases, leaders must report it instead to the local authority where the pupil lives

Following an incident, it is best practice for school leaders to meet with the parents/carers to discuss it. This could include a discussion about any behavioural triggers for the pupil, what de-escalation techniques were used, and what could be done differently in the future.

13. Post-Incident Procedures

After a restrictive intervention:

- If appropriate, the pupil(s) and staff member(s) should be medically assessed and any injuries treated. Any injury should be recorded according to school procedures.
- School leaders should have a follow-up conversation with the staff member(s) and pupil(s) involved, so they can understand what happened during the incident and why, repair and rebuild relationships, and foster a culture of continuous improvement. It is best for this to be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident.
- The headteacher should evaluate the incident as soon as possible to understand why the restrictive intervention was used, the impact on pupils and staff, any patterns or trends, and how the school could avoid using restrictive interventions in future – for example, by amending or introducing a behaviour support plan for the pupil.
- Leaders should continue to monitor the wellbeing of the pupil(s) and staff member(s) and provide additional support where needed. Pupils who witnessed the incident may also need support.

14. Prevention and De-escalation Strategies

The school should use prevention and de-escalation strategies to minimise the need for restrictive interventions. Whole-school strategies might include:

- Identifying particular 'hotspots' for behaviour issues, such as corridors or areas of the playground – and deploying staff to support in these key areas
- Identifying key times of day when behaviour issues are more frequent, and making sure that enough staff are present and on duty at these times
- Adopting a behaviour policy that includes verbal warnings, offering pupils a chance to correct their behaviour first
- Agreeing a shared language for de-escalation with staff, so that pupils receive the same messaging consistently across the school

De-escalation strategies for individual pupils might include:

- Using a calm facial expression and warm, open body language
- Using a warm, calm tone of voice with the pupil
- Calmly reminding the pupil of the consequences of not following an instruction
- Avoiding having too many members of staff present when trying to de-escalate the situation

15. Data Analysis and Governance

School leaders should regularly review and analyse data on restrictive interventions to make sure that they:

- Identify areas for improvement to policies and practices, particularly where strategies and interventions have not been effective.
- Identify areas for training and development for staff – for example, on how to use de-escalation techniques effectively.
- Understand regular patterns or triggers of behaviour for key pupils, to better support them through behaviour support plans.
- Identify when the use of restraint was used disproportionately with vulnerable pupils, including pupils with SEND.

The governing board should regularly review and interrogate this data to ensure this analysis is being conducted effectively.

16. Complaints

It is intended that by adopting this policy and keeping parents and governors informed, we can avoid the need for complaints. All disputes that arise about the use of force by a member of staff will be dealt with according to Child Protection and Safeguarding policies. Allegations that a member of staff has used excessive or inappropriate force will be dealt with in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) and may require referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).