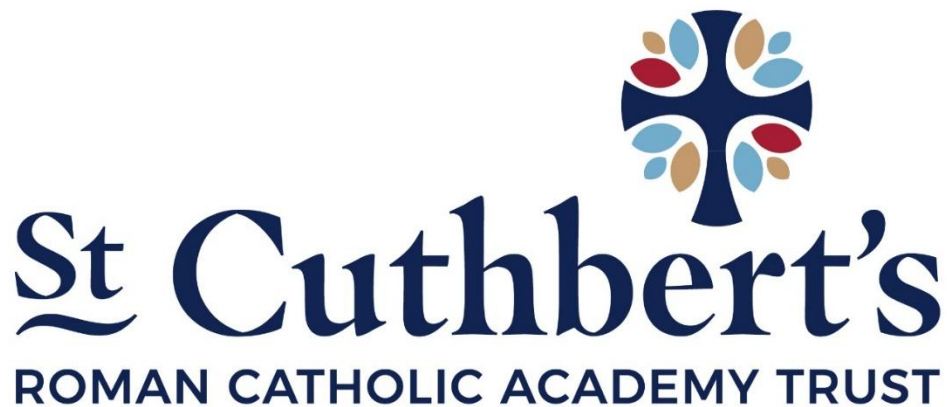




Restrictive Interventions and the Use of Reasonable Force Policy

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Approval Committee:	Board of Directors
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Date of next review:	01.06.2027

ENCOUNTER ● LEARN ● GROW ● FLOURISH

Table of changes

Version Number	Date of Version/Review	Detail changes
V. 1	May 2026	

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out the school's approach to proactively minimising the need for restrictive interventions and, where they are necessary, ensuring they are used safely, lawfully and proportionately. It covers restrictive interventions including reasonable force, restraint and seclusion, and applies to all staff, volunteers and governors in our school.

This policy reflects the Department for Education (DfE) guidance *Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools* (April 2026). The statutory guidance within that document (issued under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) must be followed in relation to recording and reporting each significant incident involving the use of force; the remainder should be followed unless there is good reason not to.

The principal legislation to which this policy document relates is:

- 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 (S.I. 2025/1348)
- the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations
- the Human Rights Act 1998
- the Equality Act 2010

2. Principles

- Restrictive interventions should be **avoided wherever possible** through effective behaviour support, prevention, and de-escalation.
- Any use of force must be **lawful, necessary, proportionate**, and applied for the **minimum amount of time**.
- Force **must never be used as a punishment**.
- The welfare, dignity and rights of the pupil must be central to all decision-making.

3. Definitions

3.1 Restrictive Intervention

An action (physical or non-physical) that prevents, restricts, or subdues a pupil's movement to prevent harm or serious disruption. This includes "reasonable force," seclusion, or restraint.

3.2 Reasonable Force

All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances, where this is necessary and proportionate. Where possible, this should be facilitated by staff members who have received appropriate training.

Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, required in the circumstances to prevent:

- injury to the pupil or others
- criminal behaviour
- serious damage to property
- serious disorder

Reasonable force must **not affect breathing or circulation**, and must not involve pressure on the neck, nose, mouth, abdomen, or forcefully holding a pupil on the ground. Staff must **never** hold a child in a **face-down (prone)** position due to the risk of **asphyxiation**.

3.3 Seclusion

A **non-disciplinary** safety measure in which a pupil is **supervised** in a safe space away from others and is prevented from leaving of their own free will (for example, by physical obstruction, blocking, or by being made to believe they will be punished if they try to leave). Seclusion must only be used for as long as necessary for the immediate risk to reduce and must **never** be used as punishment.

3.4 Restraint (including non-force related restraint)

A **non-disciplinary** intervention that restricts a pupil's movement or freedom of movement. This can occur with or without direct physical contact (for example, holding a pupil's arms to their sides, guiding a pupil away from danger, blocking movement, or removing an item that a pupil relies on, such as a walking aid).

4. When Restrictive Interventions May Be Used

Restrictive interventions may be used **only** when:

- there is an immediate risk of harm to the pupil or others
- to prevent a pupil from committing a criminal offence
- to prevent serious damage to property
- to prevent a pupil causing disorder whether during a teaching session or otherwise

They must **not** be used to enforce compliance, manage low-level behaviour, or as a behavioural consequence.

Unacceptable uses include (but are not limited to) using force to punish, using force in a way that deliberately causes pain, or using techniques that could restrict breathing or circulation.

4.1 Policy and practice (decision-making in the moment)

When restrictive intervention is necessary, staff must use professional judgement and follow these practice expectations to keep pupils and staff safe:

- **Use the least restrictive option** that is effective in the circumstances, taking account of the pupil's age, size, understanding, SEND, trauma history and communication needs.
- **Keep talking and de-escalating** throughout where possible and explain what you are doing and why in a calm, non-threatening way.
- **Continually reassess** the level of risk and **reduce or stop** the intervention as soon as the immediate risk has passed.
- **Call for help** early where needed and ensure other pupils are safeguarded (e.g., move bystanders away).
- **Monitor welfare**, including breathing, circulation and signs of distress; if there is any concern about injury or breathing, seek first aid/medical assistance immediately.
- **Escalate safeguarding concerns** promptly (including any concern about excessive, inappropriate or unsafe practice) in line with the school's safeguarding procedures.

5. Other Physical Contact with Pupils

The school does not operate a "no contact" policy. Appropriate physical contact is often necessary and in the best interests of pupils and is distinct from restrictive interventions. Examples may include: first aid; comforting or reassuring a distressed pupil; guiding or escorting a pupil; demonstrating techniques in PE or practical lessons; or reasonable adjustments to support a pupil's needs. Staff must always act professionally and with the pupil's dignity, safety and welfare in mind.

6. Considerations for Pupils with SEND and SEMH

Staff must consider how a pupil's SEND (including trauma, communication needs, autism, sensory processing or SEMH differences) may influence behaviour and responses to adults. Support should be proactive and individualised (for example through risk assessment, reasonable adjustments, and individual support/behaviour plans informed by known triggers and effective de-escalation strategies). After any restrictive intervention, staff should review whether the pupil's plan remains appropriate and what additional support is needed to reduce the likelihood of future incidents. Failure to consider SEND needs can result in pupils being disproportionately subject to restrictive interventions.

7. Staff Training

Staff who are likely to require the use of restrictive interventions must receive appropriate training in safe, lawful and trauma-informed practice. Staff who are not identified as requiring this training may also be trained to provide flexibility and capacity in responding to significant incidents. Training should include de-escalation, risk assessment and post-incident support. Staff must complete refresher training at least bi-annually.

8. Recording and Reporting Requirements

Schools have a **statutory duty** under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to ensure there is a procedure for recording and reporting **each significant incident** in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil ("use of force incident").

For the purposes of this policy, a **significant incident** is any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate everyday physical contact with pupils.

8.1 Recording

- Every significant incident must be recorded **as soon as practicable**, ideally the same day.
- All significant incidents must be recorded on the **St Cuthbert's Significant Incidents Recording** form (Annex A), uploaded to the child's safeguarding record, and reported to a member of SLT.
- Records must include:
 - names of the pupil and staff directly involved
 - time, date, location and duration of intervention
 - description of events leading to the intervention including preventative or de-escalation strategies and what type of reasonable force was applied
 - any injuries sustained or impact on the child
 - post-incident support put in place
 - rationale for the intervention, including why the use of force was necessary and proportionate
 - staff and pupil views
 - follow-up actions

The school may also wish to record additional details to support its evaluation of incidents, to identify best practice and areas for improvement.

8.2 Reporting the use of force (statutory guidance)

Parents must be notified **as soon as practicable**, before the end of the school day, of each significant use of force incident, **except** where notifying parents would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. Where the "serious harm" exception

applies, the incident must instead be reported to the local authority within whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident.

- a report to parents should include time, date, location and duration of the intervention, brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary, brief account of what type and degree of force was applied, and details of any injury sustained if applicable
- notification must occur even when the intervention forms part of an agreed behaviour plan.
- Reporting to parents must be **as soon as practicable** in line with statutory guidance.
- Reporting to parents must always be confirmed **in writing** (email or online messaging system) if this was not the first form of response.
- schools should not grant any requests by parents or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions.

Best practice would include inviting parents to have a follow-up discussion about the incident where appropriate to identify strategies focussed on reducing any future need for such interventions. The outcome of these discussions should be recorded, and relevant plans should be amended accordingly.

8.3 Recording and reporting of seclusion and non-force related restraint

Each seclusion or non-force related restraint incident must be recorded and reported as required by the schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025, including providing written information to parents.

Incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event and follow the same minimum recording points listed at 8.1.

Where an incident meets the definition of both (a) seclusion or non-force related restraint and (b) a significant use of force, the school should follow the statutory recording and reporting procedure for significant use of force incidents under section 93A (as set out in 8.1 and 8.2). There is no requirement to record the same incident twice.

9. Post-Incident Support

- Pupils must be offered emotional and, if necessary, medical support following any restrictive intervention.
- Staff should consider reparation with the pupil if appropriate in the circumstances.
- Staff involved must receive debriefing and supervision where appropriate.

- Incidents should be reviewed to reduce future risk.

10. Governance and Oversight (Using Data)

Local Governing Bodies should ensure the school has effective arrangements to record, report and review restrictive interventions, and that learning from incidents is used to minimise future need. They should regularly review and interrogate data to identify patterns and trends (including any disproportionality, for example in relation to SEND or protected characteristics), and use this to improve prevention, training and support.

- assure themselves that policies and procedures reflect statutory duties and are implemented consistently
- ensure staff receive appropriate training (including de-escalation and trauma-informed practice) and that practice is monitored and supported
- review incident data at least termly (or more frequently where needed), ensure actions are taken where risks are identified, and check that pupils and staff receive appropriate support after incidents

11. Use of reasonable force to search pupils

The headteacher and staff they authorise, have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item.

A member of staff can use such force as is **reasonable** to search for **prohibited items** that are set out in legislation and statutory guidance. However, **force cannot be used** to search for items that are banned under school rules only.

Where available, the school may also use handheld **screening/search wands** as part of pupil searches. Wands must only be used by trained and authorised staff, in a way that maintains the pupil's dignity and privacy, and as a **least intrusive** option. Any physical contact (or use of reasonable force) associated with a wand search must remain lawful, necessary and proportionate.

Prohibited items include:

- knives and weapons; alcohol; illegal drugs; stolen items; tobacco and cigarette papers; fireworks; and pornographic images
- any article that a member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence, or to cause personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil)

Under common law, school staff have the power to search a pupil for **any** item if the pupil agrees.

12. Complaints and Allegations

Any concerns about the use of force or seclusion will be managed under the school's safeguarding, complaints and allegations procedures. Serious breaches may be reported to external agencies including the local authority or Ofsted.

Appendix 1

(source React UK: School Positive Handling)

SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT REPORT FORM

This template is designed to support schools to meet the DfE guidance *Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools* (effective April 2026).

It should be used to record **all significant incidents** involving restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, restraint and seclusion

Section 1: Basic Incident Details

School Name:			
Date of Incident			
Time Incident Started		Time Incident Ended	
Total Duration			
Location(s) of Incident			
CCTV available	Yes/ No		

Section 2: Pupil Details

Pupil's Name:			
Pupil's UPN:			
Date of Birth		Age	
Ethnicity		First Language	
SEND Status	☐ EHCP ☐ SEN Support ☐ No identified SEND		
Relevant support plans in place:	☐ EHCP ☐ Behaviour Support Plan ☐ Risk Assessment ☐ Other (specify)		
Diagnosed (or suspected) Disorder/ Disability		Trauma History	Yes / No / Unknown

Section 3: Staff Involved

Your Name:	
Name of staff member leading the intervention:	
Other persons present	

Section 4: Type of Force Used

Type of Force (Tick all that apply)		
Restraint	Seclusion	Other

Section 5: Report of Incident

Adult statement – what occurred in your own words Your statement must set out what happened; give details of your part in the significant incident, your 'Honestly Held Belief', what use of restrictive intervention that you have used and how the incident was finally resolved. It should give details of any attempts made to de-escalate throughout the incident. Your statement should be completed independently of other staff involved in the incident. The written report must be completed as soon as practicable after the event. Staff should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.	
The use of force must only be used when it is reasonable in the circumstance, meaning: i. You believed that it was absolutely necessary & ii. Proportionate to the seriousness of the situation	If physical restraint was used, please tick your primary role: ☐ Right arm ☐ Left arm ☐ Supervising
Antecedents and Context	
What were you doing just before the significant incident took place?	
What was the pupil doing just before the significant incident took place?	
What signs of dysregulation were being communicated by the pupil?	
Explain what you think may have triggered this behaviour?	
How did you try to de-escalate the situation?	
What was the pupil's response?	
Dynamic Risk Assessment & Rationale	
Why did you believe it was necessary to use restrictive intervention on the child/ young person?	

☐ To prevent or stop harm to themselves	☐ To prevent or stop harm to others
☐ To prevent or stop a crime	☐ To prevent or stop damage to property
☐ To prevent or stop causing disorder at the school	☐ Other – Please specify
Describe exactly what happened (i.e. what use of force were used and by whom, why it was absolutely necessary, strictly proportionate and what your 'Honestly Held Belief' was, other steps taken to gain assistance)	
Did any other factors impact on your choice of intervention? (Welfare/Medical conditions / SEND considerations)	
Ending the Intervention	
What indicated that the risk had reduced and the intervention could end?	
How was the pupil helped back to calm state of regulation?	
Injury or Distress	
Did the pupil sustain an injury OR report pain or distress? If so, what did you do?	
Did any staff member sustain an injury or report pain or distress? If so, what did you do?	
SLT/ Manager informed (Name/ Date/ Time)	
Staff Member's Name:	
Staff member's signature:	
Date/Time:	

Section 6: Pupil Voice

Who consulted the child/ young person?	
If child / young person's voice is not captured, please give the reason.	<i>(Include steps taken to ensure communication was facilitated in line with their age/stage of development and any SEND/SEMH/Communication needs known or suspected)</i>
Date/time of consultation:	
Pupil's Statement:	
Pupil's Name:	
Pupil's Signature:	

Date/Time:	
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Section 7: Parent / Carer Communication

Details of Parent/Carer Notification (Date, Time, Person Informing)				
☐ Face to face	☐ Telephone	☐ Email	☐ Letter	☐ Text/ Messaging system
<i>Parent/ Carer Invited to Follow Up Discussion on:</i>				
<i>Parent/ Carer Meeting Attended by:</i>				
<i>Points from the meeting:</i>				

Section 8: Post-Incident Review and Follow-Up for Risk Assessment

Staff De-brief completed	Yes / No
Date/ Time	
Staff Present	
<i>Was the practice in keeping with an existing risk assessment and behaviour support plan?</i>	
<i>What can we learn regarding the pupil's behaviour from this specific incident?</i>	
<i>Has an ABC form been completed?</i>	
<i>What actions are to be taken to avoid a repeat of this behaviour? (e.g. changes to support plan, environmental adjustments, further assessment.)</i>	
<i>What might be done differently in the future?</i>	
<i>Referral or escalation required:</i> ☐ SENCo ☐ DSL	

- ☐ SLT
☐ External agency

Section 9: SLT Oversight

Reviewed by (Name and Role)	Yes / No
Date of Review	
Any Safeguarding concerns Identified <i>(If yes, include actions taken)</i>	Yes/ No
Signature	

Section 10: SLT Signature sign off

Name	
Signature	
Date of Sign off	

Data protection note: This record must be stored securely and handled in line with GDPR and the school's safeguarding and record-keeping procedures.