



Restrictive Interventions In Schools (including use of reasonable force)

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1. Aim

- 1.1 Our Schools are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers and visitors to share this commitment.
- 1.2 This policy is based on guidance outlined in the April 2026 document - "Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools". The guidance includes obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998,10 Equality Act 2010, 11 and requirements for recording and reporting incidents where staff use force or seclusion on a pupil.

2. When Force Should Be Used

- 2.1 At West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools, we recognise that all members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances, we believe that the use of reasonable force is only necessary to prevent 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

- 2.2 The use of physical restraint will always be the last resort. All other behavioural management strategies will be used before physical intervention. Non-exhaustive examples are below-

2.3 Whole-School Measures

Within West Norfolk Academies Trust our schools Behaviour Policies include:

- Consideration of how our schools and classroom environment 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 Trust staff in effective communication strategies, such as using appropriate tone of voice and emotion coaching to aid de-escalation
- Recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning

2.4 Individual Approaches

Within West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools, we will:

- Work closely with parents to support individual pupils
 - Use strategies to support individual pupils based on their identified needs, including the development of behaviour support plans
 - Give pupils time, space and strategies to calm down before their behaviour escalates
- 2.5 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 offers

3. Reasonable Force

- 3.1 Force, where used, should always be reasonable. There is no definition of 'reasonable force'. It should always be proportional to the circumstances of the incident. It will be used only to control or restrain and never with the intent to cause pain or harm. It must, therefore, be the minimum force needed to achieve the desired result.
- 3.2 Where possible staff will consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation.
- 3.3 Staff will assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks, or whether its use would escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself.
- 3.4 Staff will communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.

4. Staff Will Assess Whether the Use of Reasonable Force is Proportionate?

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

5. Have You Considered the Pupil's Welfare?

- 5.1 Staff should consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. For example, pupils who have experienced an adverse life event, with diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, Equality Act 2010, past trauma or neglect, communication difficulties, or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing. Staff should seek to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity.
- 5.2 Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and explain what the pupil needs to do.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 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.

6. Unacceptable Uses of Force

- 6.1 It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 Where appropriate, the pupil should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. For any form of restraint, including seated and standing, there is a risk of physical and psychological harm, and it should be avoided where possible.

7. Norfolk STEPS

- 7.1 West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools adopt the 'Norfolk Steps' approach to train staff in positive behaviour management. The aims of using 'Norfolk Steps' in our schools are:
- To consider risks to adults and children
 - To have a shared understanding of how to use diversion and de-escalation techniques,
 - To use the correct procedure when physical intervention is needed (flat hand guidance).
- 7.2 Key staff have been trained in STEPS techniques.
- 7.3 In the event where it is necessary to use force or physical restraint on a child, the school will ensure that at least two members of staff will be made available immediately.
- 7.4 Where restraint is used, this must be recorded and parents informed as soon as possible – this MUST happen on the same day.
- 7.5 The information will be added to CPOMS with the following information:
- A log of the incident
 - Date
 - Location
 - Names of all staff and pupils involved
- 7.6 This will also be kept as a log for each school on the google drive.

8. Seclusion

- 8.1 Definition Of Seclusion - a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving. Seclusion, as defined in this guidance, is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour.
- 8.2 At West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools, 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.
- 8.3 Seclusion should not be implemented by staff through threat of punishment.
- 8.4 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. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil should be allowed to leave.
- 8.5 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. Details will be recorded as soon as possible and parents informed. The location of seclusion, date, names of staff and pupils involved must be added to CPOMS and a separate log on google drive.

9. Consideration for Pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 At West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools, we seek to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour so that they can provide proactive support, we create an inclusive environment and consider the identify barriers in the culture or environment that may be experienced differently by pupils with SEND and seek to support pupils to cope with situations that they may find distressing.

- 9.3 We utilise staff who know individual pupils well to help identify and manage risk such as trigger points when challenging behaviour is more likely to occur, and develop proactive strategies to reduce the likelihood of restrictive interventions being used.
- 9.4 These strategies can mitigate pupils with SEND being disproportionately subject to the use of restrictive interventions.

10. Behaviour Support Plans

- 10.1 At West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools work with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.
- 10.2 Behaviour support plans detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil.
- 10.3 The plan will be discussed in conjunction with relevant people, such as teachers, parents, the pupil, pastoral staff or health professionals, and parameters around its use stated clearly in the plan. Plans are stored on Edukey alongside evidence of review meetings.
- 10.4 Where there is an identified risk, such as increased likelihood in the need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions, West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools must have risk assessments in place and where possible, mitigate risks such as through training and prevention strategies.
- 10.5 At West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools behaviour support plans will be reviewed with the pupil and their parent periodically and following any significant incident, so that changes can be made based on evidence of what has worked and what has not worked in practice for the individual pupil.
- 10.6 Where a pupil has a disability, West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools recognise their 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 schools, and that they can enjoy the other benefits, facilities and services that the schools provide for pupils.
- 10.7 We will work with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies. Depending on the circumstances, examples of strategies may include:
- removing stimuli that may be causing distress
 - changing body language, facial expression, and/or tone of voice
 - supporting the pupil to express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
 - engaging the pupil in an activity which can help them manage their feelings of anxiety
 - distracting the pupil in something that interests them or by introducing familiar objects and activities to redirect their attention

11. Pupil and Staff Support

- 11.1 At West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools, Leaders will 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, and how the use of restrictive interventions might be avoided in future, for example by amending or introducing a behaviour support plan.
- 11.2 If appropriate, the pupil and staff member involved will receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. Incidents in which a member of staff uses reasonable force or seclusion on a pupil will be recorded.
- 11.3 In addition, any injuries should be recorded in accordance with West Norfolk Academies Trust procedures and reported as appropriate to the Health and Safety Executive.
- 11.4 Schools will continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed, for example through further follow-up conversations, counselling
- 11.5 Additionally, any pupil who witnesses an incident of restrictive intervention where a peer may have been injured or become distressed should also be provided with appropriate support where necessary usually by school staff.

12. The Use of Force (Statutory Guidance)

- 12.1 At West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools, we recognise that we must ensure that a procedure is in place for recording each significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil, as part of the school's duty under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- 12.2 At West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools, incidents will be recorded as soon as practicable after the event on CPOMS. It will be recorded by the staff member(s) involved and they will endeavour to do this no later than the same day. The procedure must require that 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 restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.
- 12.3 In discharging their duty to have a procedure in place for recording use of force incidents, the governing body or proprietor must have regard to this guidance and any other relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State for these purposes.
- 12.4 At West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools, the record must contain the following details as a minimum:
- 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
 - 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
- 12.5. At West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools, we may record additional details to support leaders' evaluation of incidents to identify best practices and areas for improvement. For example, the pupil's and/or witnesses' accounts of what happened, when and how parents were notified, and what follow-up has taken place.

13. Reporting the Use of Force (Statutory Guidance)

- 13.1. Governing bodies of maintained schools and the proprietors of other schools must ensure that 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 they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.
- 13.2. 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.
- 13.3. In this instance, the staff member will 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.
- 13.4. A report of the incident made to parents should include the following details as a minimum:
- Time
 - Date

- Location
- 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.

13.5. The requirement to report applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

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

13.7. Best practice would include inviting parents to have a follow-up discussion about the incident where appropriate. This could involve a discussion about:

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

13.8. West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools may use this information to amend any existing behaviour support plans, as needed.

14. Physical Contact

14.1. West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools do not have a 'no contact' policy.

14.2. Additionally, we do not grant any requests by parents or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions.

14.3. Examples of occasions when physical contact is generally appropriate include:

- To give first aid
- To guide or escort students to help with self-regulation
- To prevent harm to other students, themselves or staff
- To comfort a distressed student
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during sports coaching

15. Complaints and Allegations

15.1 Any complaints regarding the use of restrictive interventions should be dealt with in accordance with the school's normal 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.

Restraint is an extremely rare incidence in any school and will only be used as an absolute last resort.

Appendix 1

Restraint of A Child in School - Recording and Reporting Individual

Child Record of Restraint

This template should be used and uploaded to the child's record either on CPOMS or in the case of a child having additional needs onto Edu key.

Record of Significant Incident: Use of Reasonable Force / Restrictive Intervention

1. Basic Information

- Pupil Name: _____
- Staff Involved (Names & Roles): _____
- Date of Incident: _____
- Time of Incident: _____
- Location: _____
- Approximate Duration of Intervention: _____ minutes

2. Pupil Profile & Context

- Relevant Needs/Circumstances(e.g.,SEND,Trauma): _____
- SEN Status Code (if applicable): _____

3. Incident Chronology

- Triggers/Events Leading to Incident: _____
- De-escalation Strategies Attempted (delete as appropriate)
 - Verbal redirection
 - Tactical ignoring
 - Distraction/Diversion
 - Change of staff
 - Reassurance
 - Other: _____

Why was intervention necessary (delete as appropriate)

- To prevent injury to the pupil or others

- To stop a criminal offence
- To prevent significant property damage
- To maintain order/prevent significant disruption

4. Details of Intervention

- Type of Force Applied
(e.g., guided hold, seated restraint): _____
- Degree of Force Used: _____
- Pupil's Response during Intervention: _____

5. Wellbeing & Injuries

- Injuries Sustained (Pupil): _____
- Injuries Sustained (Staff/Others): _____
- First Aid/Medical Treatment Provided: _____

6. Reporting & Follow-up

Parents Notified (Date/Time/Method): _____

Written Report Sent to Parents (Date): _____

Pupil's View of the Incident: _____

Post-Incident Support/Debrief (Staff & Pupil):

Staff Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Headteacher/Reviewer Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix 2
Whole School Recording Template
Add School logo

Incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event. This document should be stored on each school drive and updated for each incident. It should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day

Child Name	Relevant needs (e.g. K/E)	Staff Name	Time/Date	Location /Duration	Parents informed
Brief account		Why force used		Post incident support	
Child Name	Relevant needs (e.g. K/E)	Staff Name	Time/Date	Location / Duration	Parents Informed
Brief account		Why force used		Post incident support	
Child Name	Relevant needs (e.g. K/E)	Staff Name	Time/Date	Location / Duration	Parents Informed
Brief account		Why force used		Post incident support	
Child Name	Relevant needs (e.g. K/E)	Staff Name	Time/Date	Location / Duration	Parents Informed
Brief account		Why force used		Post incident support	
Annual analysis for use of force with actions taken- reported to Governors					

Appendix 3 - Report to Parent Template for use of reasonable force in school

Initial call made with follow up letter on same day, also send home individual incident report

On school letterhead

Subject: Notification of Significant Incident – [Pupil Name]

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

I am writing to inform you of an incident involving **[Pupil Name]** that occurred today, **[Date]**, at **[Time]** in the **[Location, e.g., School Hall]**.

As part of our commitment to safety and in line with the statutory guidance regarding the use of reasonable force, we are required to notify you in writing when a restrictive intervention has been necessary.

Details of the Incident

To ensure the safety of **[Pupil Name / other pupils / staff]**, it was necessary for staff to use reasonable force to **[Reason, e.g., prevent physical injury / stop significant damage to property]**.

Nature of Intervention

The intervention involved **[Type of force, e.g., a guided hold / physical restraint]** and lasted for approximately **[Duration]**. The level of force used was the minimum necessary to resolve the situation safely and was applied by trained staff members.

Wellbeing and Injuries

Following the incident:

- **[Pupil Name]** was checked for injuries. **[Detail: e.g., No injuries were sustained / Minor graze to the arm]**.
- Staff involved **[Detail: e.g., sustained no injuries / are being supported]**.

Next Steps

We have completed a full internal report of this incident. We would like to invite you to a meeting on **[Date/Time]** to discuss what happened, review **[Pupil Name]**'s support plan, and look at how we can prevent similar incidents in the future.

If you have any immediate questions, please do not hesitate to contact **[Staff Name/Role]**. Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

[Headteacher/Lead Name]