



Restrictive Interventions & Use of Reasonable Force Policy

Status: HR Policy

Applies to: All schools within Attenborough Learning Trust

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1. Policy Statement and Purpose

This policy outlines how Attenborough Learning Trust (ALT) will use restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, in line with the updated Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools' guidance (effective from 1 April 2026). The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect the rights, safety and dignity of all pupils and staff
- Minimise the need for restrictive interventions through prevention, early support and de-escalation
- Ensure that when restrictive interventions are necessary, they are lawful, proportionate, necessary and time-limited
- Meet new legal duties to record and report restrictive interventions and seclusion from April 2026 This policy applies to all school staff, including temporary staff, volunteers and peripatetic specialists.

2. Legal Framework and Definitions

This policy complies fully with the DfE statutory guidance: [Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools \(April 2026\)](#), the *Equality Act 2010*, and the *Human Rights Act 1998*. Furthermore, in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) expectations, the governing body ensures that the school behaviour policy includes the power to use reasonable force. In line with the 2026 DfE framework, all staff must understand the following definitions:

Restrictive Intervention (including non-physical restraint): The umbrella term for any planned or reactive action that immobilises a pupil, limits their movement, liberty, or freedom to act independently. This includes physical force and non-physical restraint (e.g., removing a pupil's walking aid or crutches).

Reasonable Force: The minimum degree of force necessary, applied for the shortest possible duration, to maintain safety and prevent harm.

Significant Incident: Any incident where force goes beyond appropriate physical contact (such as guiding or comforting a pupil) and includes instances when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention. All significant incidents trigger statutory recording and reporting duties.

Seclusion vs. Safe Space: Seclusion is a non-disciplinary safety measure involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others where they are prevented from leaving. It is only permitted in extreme safety emergencies to protect others from harm. During seclusion, a pupil must be supervised at all times and allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced. It must **never** be used as a punishment. This is distinctly different from a pupil voluntarily using a safe space to self-regulate. The place to which the pupil is confined should be safe and not feel threatening or intimidating to the pupil.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Trustees**
 - Ensure the school complies with statutory duties
 - Monitor patterns, frequency and impact of interventions through data review
 - Ensure staff training and policy updates are robust and current
- **Headteacher**
 - Ensure staff receive training
 - Oversee incident reporting systems
 - Maintain communication with parents
- **Staff**
 - Exercise professional judgement
 - Use de-escalation and positive behaviour support
 - Follow recording/reporting procedures

4. Preventative Strategies and De-escalation

Consistent behaviour management is a tool for equity. Disruption disproportionately harms disadvantaged and vulnerable learners. Before any restrictive intervention is considered, where possible and safe to do so, staff should employ de-escalation strategies:

- Applying consistent, whole-class behaviour management and actively managing communal spaces (such as corridors and playgrounds) to ensure they remain calm and safe environments.
- Using calm, predictable authority, appropriate tone of voice, empathy, and consistent routines.
- Providing clear visual aids and structured choices for pupils with SEND.
- Tactical ignoring of secondary behaviours and defusing potential conflict.
- Giving pupils strategies to process instructions and calm down before their behaviour escalates.

5. The Lawful Use of Restrictive Interventions

Teachers and authorised staff have the legal power to use reasonable force to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- Causing personal injury to themselves or others.
- Committing a criminal offence.
- Causing significant damage to property.
- Causing disorder among pupils at the school.

Before applying any restrictive intervention, staff should rapidly assess:

- **Is it necessary?** Are there less restrictive ways to manage the risk?
- **Is it proportionate?** Are you using the least amount of force for the shortest time?
- **Have you considered the pupil's welfare?** Balancing the intervention against the pupil's personal circumstances, SEND, or trauma history

The Headteacher, and staff they authorise, may also use reasonable force to conduct a search for legally prohibited items (such as weapons or illegal drugs), but force may **not** be used to search for items that are merely banned under school rules. Staff must always refer to the [DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools guidance](#) for detailed procedures on conducting lawful searches.

The Trust does not operate a 'no contact' policy and cannot legally grant requests from parents, carers, or staff to exempt a pupil from the use of reasonable force where it is necessary to keep them or others safe. Staff should feel confident in making appropriate, supportive physical contact with pupils where necessary. This does not constitute a restrictive intervention. Examples of appropriate contact include giving first aid, holding a younger pupil's hand to guide them safely, comforting a distressed pupil, or offering a pat on the back to congratulate them.

Furthermore, the use of force on the ground carries significant risks and should be avoided where possible. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground during a dynamic incident, staff must release their holds or reposition to a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.

6. Unacceptable Practices

The following practices are prohibited in strict accordance with the 2026 guidance:

- Using force to punish or enforce compliance
- Restraint that affects breathing/circulation or uses pressure on neck, abdomen, nose or mouth
- Prone (face-down) restraint or intentionally forcing a pupil onto the ground
- Pain-inducing techniques
- Seclusion used without recording/reporting
- Any use of restraint where risks outweigh potential safety benefits

7. Equity in Access: Pupils with SEND and Vulnerabilities

ALT operates on the principle that fairness is not sameness. We recognise that pupils with SEND or a history of trauma may be disproportionately affected by restrictive interventions. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, the Trust has a legal obligation to support pupils with disabilities by making reasonable adjustments, ensuring they can fully benefit from the school's offer without being disproportionately subjected to restrictive interventions.

For pupils identified as likely to experience high levels of dysregulation, the school's Inclusion Team will work closely with the pupil, their parents, and any relevant health or pastoral professionals to co-produce any necessary Behaviour Support Plans and Risk Assessments based on their identified needs. These plans will detail:

- Specific known triggers and warning signs.
- Preventative primary strategies and safe, agreed secondary interventions.
- Environmental adjustments to address aspects of the school the pupil finds challenging.
- Strategies to help the pupil communicate their needs effectively.
- Clear parameters and circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with the pupil.

8. Principles for Early Years

- Physical contact is often necessary for care, comfort and safety (e.g., guiding, hand-holding)
- Staff must differentiate between necessary, developmentally appropriate contact and restrictive intervention
- De-escalation includes distraction, sensory calming, co-regulation and removing environmental triggers
- EYFS behaviour expectations focus on emotional regulation, not compliance Reasonable Force in EYFS May only be used to:
 - Prevent immediate harm (e.g., running into a road, hitting another child)
 - Prevent serious damage to property

And must be:

- Minimal
- Developmentally appropriate
- Time-limited
- Recorded and reported in line with 2026 requirements Separation and “Time Away”
- Must be supervised; seclusion must be recorded and reported under statutory duties
- Not used as punishment
- Must remain proportionate, supportive and brief Touch for Care
- Non-restrictive physical contact (comforting, lifting younger children, hand-holding) is permitted and not considered “force” when it supports the child’s wellbeing

9. Statutory Recording, Reporting, and Monitoring

ALT is committed to absolute transparency and measuring inclusion through outcomes and impact is a non-negotiable performance standard. To comply with Department for Education statutory duties, the Trust mandates the strict recording and reporting of all restrictive interventions.

Staff must be aware that recording duties now fall under two distinct pieces of legislation:

- Section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which states that every “significant incident” involving the use of physical force must be recorded.
- The schools (Recording and reporting of Seclusion and restraint (No.2) England Regulations 2025, which states that all incidents of seclusion, as well as incidents of restraint that do not involve direct physical force must be recorded.

If an incident involves both restraint and a significant use of physical force, it only needs to be recorded once under the Section 93A procedure to avoid duplication.

All incidents of force, seclusion or non-force restraint must be logged on the Local Authority positive handling record form as soon as practicable after the event, and staff should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

All logs must explicitly include:

- the names of the pupil and staff directly involved
- the time, date, location, and approximate duration of the intervention

- the pupil's SEN status code and any relevant needs or circumstances
- a brief account of what led up to the incident, including identified or potential triggers if known.
- a brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
- the specific type and degree of force applied (if applicable)
- the de-escalation steps attempted
- details of any physical injuries sustained
- any post-incident support provided, including details of any medical treatment.

Under the aforementioned legal duties, parents/carers must be notified in writing of any significant incident of force, seclusion, or restraint. A member of the School Leadership Team will contact the family as soon as practicable after the incident, and will endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

The written notification to parents must legally include the time, date, location, approximate duration of the intervention, a brief account of why it was necessary, the type and degree of force applied (if applicable), and details of any physical injuries sustained.

As best practice, parents will be invited to have a follow-up discussion about the incident to review triggers, de-escalation strategies, and whether the Positive Handling Plan requires amending.

- *Legal Exceptions:* If reporting the incident to parents would likely result in serious harm to the pupil, the Local Authority will be notified instead.

The School Leadership Team (including the Headteacher, SENDCo, and Pastoral Leads) will record and analyse intervention data on a frequent and routine basis. This data will be used proactively to inform improvement planning, identify individual pupil trends, trigger the review of a Positive Handling Plan, and ensure interventions are used proportionately.

The school's LGB and the Trust Executive will review high-level intervention data termly to provide strategic oversight, identify Trust-wide training needs, and identify any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to pupils who share protected characteristics, have SEND, or other vulnerabilities.

10. Pastoral Foundations, Repair, and Post-Incident Support

Following any restrictive intervention, the physical welfare of the pupil and staff involved must be checked. If there are any signs of physical injury, a qualified First Aider should be called upon to provide immediate first aid for minor injuries or, where appropriate, ensure that professional medical help is sought. Any injuries sustained must be recorded and reported as set out by the [ALT accident reporting procedure](#). Support must also be provided to any pupil who witnesses an incident where a peer may have been injured or distressed.

To support the ongoing emotional welfare and wellbeing of the pupil and staff involved, a follow-up conversation and debriefing meeting (ideally facilitated by a neutral staff member) will take place. This conversation is framed as an opportunity for reflection and learning, aiming to

understand what happened and why. Our focus is to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue, ensuring every incident is a chance for growth and allows the pupil to start afresh.

11. Staff Training, Risk Assessments, and Wellbeing

We recognise that supporting pupils in crisis can be highly stressful. Under our Leigh Balance support package, the Trust is committed to the physical, mental, and emotional health of our workforce.

- The Trust will carry out risk assessments for staff who regularly work alongside pupils where restrictive interventions may be required to ensure their health and safety.
- The Headteacher will ensure staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions are adequately trained in its safe and lawful use as well as preventative strategies so that staff may judge when it is appropriate to use restrictive interventions, including in situations where quick decisions are needed.
- All staff will receive ongoing CPD on effective communication strategies, adaptive teaching and de-escalation.
- Staff involved in significant incidents will be offered post-incident wellbeing support, including access to our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) where needed.

12. Complaints and Allegations

Any complaints regarding the use of restrictive interventions will be dealt with in accordance with the Trust's normal complaints procedure.

If an allegation regarding the inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions is made against a member of staff, the procedures set out in [ALT Managing allegations against staff policy](#), [ALT Safeguarding policy](#) and within *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)* will be strictly followed. This includes all provisions regarding the suspension of staff pending investigation.

13. Communicating the Policy

Communicating the Trust's policy on the use of restrictive interventions to all members of the community is an important way of building and maintaining our culture and making expectations transparent to all. To ensure this, School leaders will ensure that this policy is made readily available and accessible to all staff, pupils, and parents via the school website.