



**Northbourne Park School (including EYFS)**

# **Restrictive Interventions Policy (including the use of reasonable force)**

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Owned by: Head teacher

Reviewers: SMT

Approved by: Board of Governors

## **Introduction**

The use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, can have a significant impact on the pupils, staff members and parents involved, as well as the wider classroom.

However, there are times when the use of restrictive interventions will be lawful and necessary; for example, to keep individuals and the wider school community safe.

This policy pays due regard to the DfE Guidance on Restrictive interventions (April 2026) and aims proactively to minimise the need to use restrictive interventions at Northbourne Park School through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies. When necessary, it aims to help staff feel more confident in knowing how to use these interventions safely, appropriately and lawfully.

Staff will take all reasonable steps to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of all pupils, whatever their need. As a matter of principle, staff will always adopt non-physical strategies before using reasonable force or restraint. However, there are times when the use of restrictive interventions will be lawful and necessary; for example, to keep individuals and the wider school community safe.

## **Aims and objectives**

The aim of this policy is:

- To provide clear guidance on the use of restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force or restraint.
- To clarify who may use reasonable force or restraint
- To explain when and where reasonable force or restraint may be used.
- To define what constitutes 'reasonable force or restraint'.
- To specify the procedures for reporting and recording the use of reasonable force or restraint.

## **Definitions:**

**Restrictive intervention:** a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. 'Restrictive intervention' is the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain a pupil in anyway.

**Reasonable force:** a term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

**Restraint:** a term used in legislation referring to a non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical

contact. For example, holding a pupil's arms to their sides or removing a pupil's crutches would both be considered forms of restraint.

**Seclusion:** a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving.

**Significant incident:** any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff as described below. This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

### **Preventative Strategies**

Northbourne Park School actively promotes positive behaviour management strategies, thus reducing the need for the use of any form of physical intervention, except in emergency situations for the safety of pupils.

### **Risk Assessment**

Risk assessment is one of our preventative strategies to minimise the risk of an incident escalating unnecessarily and will be normal practice for our School where a pupil, or a small number of pupils, are known to exhibit disturbing or distressing behaviour.

The School will conduct a Risk Assessment only for those pupils where there is a foreseeable risk of harm to the pupil, or other pupils and / or property and enables the School to plan and train staff accordingly. The School considers Risk Assessment from two perspectives,

(a) environmental risk assessment

(b) individual risk assessment.

### **Appropriate Physical Contact with Pupils**

Northbourne Park School does not have a 'no contact' policy between staff and pupils. It is appropriate and necessary for staff to have physical contact with pupils in the normal operation of the school. Examples include:

- to give first aid
- to guide or escort pupils, such as holding the hand of a pupil at the front/back of the line when going to assembly, when walking together around the school or on a school trip, or when helping a pupil to a space they have chosen to access to self-regulate
- to comfort a distressed pupil
- to congratulate or praise a pupil, for example a pat on the back or a handshake
- to demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- to demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching

In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in a given situation, the member of staff should use their judgement and have regard to:

- the school's Child Protection Policy and Staff Code of Conduct
- the applicable circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present
- the individual pupil's age
- any other material factors, including but not limited to whether the pupil has SEND or other vulnerabilities
- whether any alternative strategies that do not include physical contact can be used

### **Who may use Reasonable Force or Restraint?**

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

To prevent or stop a pupil from:

1. causing injury to themselves or others
2. committing a criminal offence
3. damaging property
4. causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions will be adequately trained in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies.

### **Unacceptable uses of force**

It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment.

Pupils must 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. The use of force can be dangerous, particularly where it occurs on the ground. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff must release their holds or re-position into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.

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.

### **Determining when use of restrictive interventions is appropriate**

There will be times when school staff may need to use restrictive interventions, and they should know this option may be available to them. The decision on whether it is reasonable to use a restrictive intervention depends on the individual circumstances of each situation.

To make this assessment, the member of staff should consider the following:

Is it necessary?

- Staff should consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation.
- Staff should assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely successfully to reduce the relevant risks, or whether its use would escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself.
- Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.

Is it proportionate?

- Staff should use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce the relevant risks.
- If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy.
- Staff should consider the personal circumstances of the pupil such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.<sup>14</sup>

Have you considered the pupil's welfare?

- 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, 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. This may include, where possible, considering the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.
- Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and explain what the pupil needs to do.
- 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.
- 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.

This list of factors is not exhaustive, and staff should also take into account other relevant considerations.

Training on the use of restrictive interventions will equip staff to judge when it is appropriate to use restrictive interventions, including in situations where quick decisions are needed. It

will also help staff understand how to assess whether their response is reasonable under pressure.

### **What might be regarded as Reasonable Force or Restraint?**

After other non-physical behaviour management strategies have failed a 'minimum intervention of force' will reasonably be employed.

This force will be commensurate with the age, gender, physical strength and size of the child. The staff member will also take into account any medical conditions, special needs of the pupil, using force in a way which preserves the dignity and respect of all concerned.

The use of reasonable force or restraint should involve a calm and measured approach at all times appropriate to the needs of the child and be in accordance with Schools' agreed strategies.

Staff are advised to adopt the following procedures unless the child is in immediate risk of harm:

- Tell the pupil to stop the inappropriate behaviour, clearly stating the desired behaviour.
- During the incident, repeatedly reassure the pupil and tell him/her, in appropriate language, that physical contact will stop as soon as he/she is ready to behave appropriately.

The forms of reasonable force or restraint that the School will use will depend on the individual circumstances and are:

- Holding
- Leading by the hand
- Lifting to a safe place
- Protecting by blocking harmful surfaces with hand/body

### **Seclusion**

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.

Seclusion, is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. There are disciplinary measures that are similar, such as removal from the classroom. Please refer to the school's Behaviour Policy for further details.

Seclusion must not be implemented by staff through threat of punishment.

At the Prep School, pupils may be secluded in the medical centre welfare room, and in the Puzzle room at the Pre-Prep. Pupils will 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.

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' below.

### **Consideration for pupils with SEND**

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. This can lead to pupils with SEND being disproportionately subject to the use of restrictive interventions.

Staff should seek to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour so that they can provide proactive support.

Staff who know individual pupils well will 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. They should also 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

School staff will work with pupils with SEND and their parents in the co-production of any necessary behaviour support plans. Behaviour support plans will outline any adjustments, such as to address aspects of the school environment which the pupil finds challenging and ways for pupils to communicate their needs effectively.

Behaviour support plans will detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil. This should be discussed in conjunction with the relevant people, such as teachers, parents, the pupil, pastoral staff or health professionals, and parameters around its use stated clearly in the plan.

Where there is an identified risk, such as increased likelihood in the need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions, the school will put a risk assessment in place and where possible, mitigate risks such as through training and prevention strategies.

Whether the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate will depend on the circumstances, irrespective of whether it has been considered as part of a behaviour support plan.

Any behaviour support plans should 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.

Where a pupil has a disability, the school has a 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 school, and that they can enjoy the other benefits, facilities and services that the school provides for pupils.

### **Pupil and staff support**

Schools should 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.

If appropriate, the pupil and staff member involved should 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 must be recorded as described in 'Recording and reporting duties' section below.

In addition, any injuries should be recorded in accordance with the school's procedures and reported as appropriate to the Health and Safety Executive.

The school will hold follow-up conversations to facilitate reflection, learning and to support pupil and staff wellbeing. These conversations are part of the overall debriefing process and look to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from both the staff and pupils involved, as well as to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue. This process will be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident.

The school will continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed, for example through further follow-up conversations, counselling or other resources. Additionally, any pupil who witnesses an incident of restrictive intervention where a peer may have been injured or become distressed will also be provided with appropriate support where necessary.

## **Procedures for reporting and recording incidents involving the use of Restrictive Interventions, including Reasonable Force or Restraint**

Any significant incident as defined in this policy must be recorded and reported as soon as practicable after the event. This includes the use of seclusion and non-force-related restraint.

It should be recorded in writing by the staff member(s) involved using the form in Appendix A, no later than the same day, and reported to parents in writing as soon as practicable (the same day, if possible) and in a follow-up discussion. The requirement to record and 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.

### **Governors Responsibilities**

The governing body of Northbourne Park School ensures 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.

The governing body regularly reviews and interrogates data on restrictive interventions to ensure school leaders:

- identify and implement improvements to policies and practices, particularly where approaches have been used for some time but have not been effective
- identify areas of learning and development for school staff, supporting specific departments and teachers to improve understanding and practice
- understand pupils' repeat patterns and triggers to interrogate the effectiveness of pupil support measures, share this information with teachers who work with those pupils better to support them and, where appropriate, their parents, to establish a behaviour support plan or revise an existing plan
- identify any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to pupils who share protected characteristics, have SEN, or other types of vulnerability.

### **Complaints**

Any complaints regarding the use of restrictive interventions should be dealt with in accordance with the school's normal complaints procedure. Please refer to the *NPS Complaints Procedure* for further information.

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 and the schools policies will be followed. This includes the provisions regarding suspension of staff.

Appendix A



**NORTHBOURNE PARK SCHOOL**

**Restrictive Interventions Record**

Child's name:	Time, Date, Duration and Location of Incident:	Staff member directly involved:
Relevant pupil needs or circumstances (incl. SEND):		
Details of incident, the background, identified triggers, de-escalation strategies used and intervention used, including any injuries sustained:		
Why restrictive intervention was assessed as necessary in this instance:		
Was the intervention successful?		
Were there any witnesses to the intervention?		
Post-incident support:		
Pupil comments:		
Parent comments:		
Parent name:	Date signed by parent	
Parent signature		