

Restrictive Interventions Policy

(including the Use of Reasonable Force)



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| Author | Stephanie Sheppard |
| Checked by | Zoe Cooper |
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Introduction

Veritas Multi-Academy Trust is committed to ensuring a safe and supportive learning environment for all pupils and staff. This policy outlines the use of restrictive interventions in our schools, based on the latest guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). It aims to provide clear procedures and standards for when and how restrictive interventions may be used to keep individuals and the wider school community safe.

The Trust aims to proactively minimise the need to use restrictive interventions through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies.

Definitions

Restrictive interventions are used to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body or part of the body. Restrictive interventions include physical and non-physical actions aimed at restraining pupils' movement. For example, supervised seclusion of a pupil in an area away from others, where the pupil is prevented from leaving for their own safety and/or the safety of others, or Passive physical contact, such as a staff member blocking a pupil's path if they're running towards danger (like a busy road), or staff standing between pupils to prevent a fight

Reasonable force is the amount of force that staff members can (in certain circumstances) legally use to temporarily restrict a pupil's movement. It means using no more force than is necessary, for the least amount of time for the desired outcome.

A **significant incident** is any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact (see definition below) between a member of staff and a pupil.

Appropriate contact might include a handshake to congratulate a pupil, giving first aid, or demonstrating how to use a musical instrument. See pages 7 and 8 of the guidance (linked above) for more examples of contact that is generally appropriate.

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention that keeps a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevents them from leaving, for the safety of that pupil and/or others. This could be through physical obstruction or by making the pupil believe that they will be punished if they leave. For example, putting a pupil into a 'holding' room until they calm down, is a form of seclusion.

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.

The terms are defined for completeness and should not be construed as endorsement.

Legal Framework

This policy is informed by the following legal frameworks and guidance:

- *Education Act 1996*
- *Education and Inspections Act 2006*
- *DfE guidance: "Use of Restrictive Interventions" 2026*
- *Human Rights Act 1998*

- *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025*
- *The Equality Act 2010*
- *Health and Safety at work Act 1974 and associated regulations*

Understanding Restrictive Interventions

All incidents of the use of reasonable force in school must be underpinned by the principle of minimum force, maximum care. All incidents of reasonable force being used in school must be deemed to be reasonable, proportionate and necessary, to prevent or stop a pupil from:

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

Determining when the use of Restrictive Intervention is appropriate

The decision on whether it is reasonable to use a restrictive intervention depends on the individual circumstances of each situation. Actions taken must always be in the best interests of the child, considering their safety and welfare (and safety and welfare of others), as the utmost priority.

The use of de-escalation and preventative strategies are always preferred methods of intervention and should always be considered in the first instance.

All staff members are required to familiarise themselves with this policy and understand the below considerations, prior to making an assessment of their situation, and whether use of restrictive intervention is appropriate:

Is restrictive intervention necessary?

- Are there other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation – i.e. de-escalation strategies?
- is it likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks?
- Would the use of restrictive intervention 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 restrictive intervention 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.

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.

Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions should be adequately trained in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies. Training on the use of restrictive interventions should equip staff to judge when it is appropriate to use restrictive interventions, including in situations where quick decisions are needed.

It should also help staff understand how to assess whether their response is reasonable under pressure. If the above points have been considered prior to making an assessment, and a decision has been made to use restrictive interventions, staff should be supported in their decision making.

Consideration for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (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 for their safety and the safety of others.

One of Veritas MAT's core values is inclusion. The Trust and Schools:

- Seek to ensure all pupils experience a school environment and culture that is inclusive for all
- Work with the pupil, parents, staff and other professionals (where required) to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies specific to a child's individual need
- Where necessary work with parents in the co-production of any necessary behaviour and/or support plans, which would factor in any adjustments or aspects of the school environment which the pupil may find challenging and ways for pupils to communicate their needs effectively.

To best support pupils with SEND, where an increased likelihood in the need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions, schools must have risk assessments in place and where possible, mitigate risks through training and prevention strategies.

Any support or behaviour plans should be reviewed with the parent and pupil, and following any significant incident, so that changes can be made and tailored to the pupil accordingly.

Unacceptable use of force

It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment. We never use force as a sanction, threat or deterrent.

Our staff understand that any form of force or restraint carries a risk of physical and psychological harm, so we always avoid using these measures where possible.

The following uses of force are **never acceptable**:

- › Staff using force for the purpose of punishment

- › Staff restraining a pupil in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation, for example by covering their nose and/or mouth or applying pressure to their neck or abdomen
- › Staff using force on the ground. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their hold or move into a safer position as quickly as possible.

Using reasonable force to search pupils

The headteacher and any member of staff authorised by the headteacher, have a statutory power to search a pupil or their belongings if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item (as listed in the DfE's [searching, screening and confiscation guidance](#)) or an item banned under our school rules.

They **can** use reasonable force to search for prohibited items (as listed in the DfE's searching, screening and confiscation guidance), such as knives, weapons, stolen items or illegal drugs.

They **cannot** use reasonable force to search for items that are banned under our school rules only, such as mobile phones, for example.

The decision to use reasonable force to carry out a search should be made carefully, on a case-by-case basis and taking into consideration the level of risk to pupils and staff. Please see our behaviour policy for more information.

Prioritising prevention and de-escalation

Veritas MAT is committed to providing a safe learning environment which provides 'irresistible learning for all'.

The Trust and school leaders work collaboratively to promote:

- Positive school and classroom environments which supports the individual needs of all pupils so they can achieve and thrive
- Have high expectations of behaviour management across each of our schools, with staff and pupils adhering to individual school behaviour policies and strategies inside and outside of the classroom
- Continued investment in staff training and professional development to ensure effective communication strategies, such as tone of voice and empathy, are used effectively to manage relationships, build trust between staff and pupils and aid successful de-escalation strategies,
- Recording and analysis of the use of restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning across the Trust.
- Ensuring that the policy is made available to all staff, pupils and parents to ensure full transparency and trust across our school communities.

Some pupils may require additional support based on their identified needs. This could include:

- Where a pupil has a disability, our schools are legally obliged, under the Equality Act 2010, to support pupils with any reasonable adjustments, making sure they can benefit from what the school offers.
- Where a pupil has a behaviour support plan, additional time, space and strategies can be agreed to help calm behaviour prior to escalation.
- The school will continue to work closely with parents to support individual pupils.

Recording and Reporting Duties

Following the use of **any restrictive intervention**, the following steps must be taken:

Internal reporting (statutory)

- The incident **must** be recorded via MyConcern as soon as practicable after the event.
- It should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved and **completed no later than the same day**. (This applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan).
- The report should include 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 and 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

Where possible, any additional details which may support the school/Trust in their evaluation of incidents to identify areas for improvement:

- any witness accounts
- what follow-up has taken place
- when and how parents are notified

Reporting to parents/families

Once recorded via MyConcern and discussed with a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), a report of the incident made to parents/carers should be made. It will be at the discretion of the SLT who will make this report to the parent/carers.

A report to families should include the following details as a minimum:

- time, date, location and 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

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.

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

Where possible or appropriate, the School may wish to invite parents/carers to have a follow-up discussion about the incident to support or amend any existing behaviour support plans as needed.

Recording and reporting the use of seclusion and non-force related restraint

As outlined in the definitions of this policy, an incident of restraint may occur with or without direct physical contact but incidents of this nature must still be recorded.

- The incident must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event
- It should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved and **completed no later than the same day.** (This applies even if the use of seclusion or restraint in certain circumstances is agreed with parents/carers as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan).

The report should include as a minimum:

- names of pupil and staff directly involved
- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- 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
- brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance

- details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts.

Parents/carers must be informed as soon as practicable after the incident and schools should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

In circumstances where a restraint incident also constitutes a significant use of force, schools only need to follow the reporting procedure for significant use of force incidents under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 as outlined above. The same information does not need to be reported twice. However, if a restraint incident does not constitute a significant incident of use of force, for example, the removal of a walking aid, this must be reported under the procedures outlined in this section.

Training and risk assessments

Our school leaders will make sure that all staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions are adequately trained in their safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies.

We also have a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of our staff. Therefore, we carry out risk assessments to ensure that staff who regularly work alongside pupils where the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions may be required can do so as safely as possible.

Roles and Responsibilities

All Staff

- Are responsible for reviewing and understanding this policy and procedure
- Understanding the definitions of restrictive interventions
- Understanding when they should / should not be used
- Understanding their role in prevention and de-escalation strategies
- Understanding their role on providing an inclusive and positive learning environment
- Are responsible for reporting and recording the use of restrictive interventions, within the same day
- To engage in training provided
- Actively engage in providing feedback to processes and procedures which would support pupils in their learning and ability to thrive within their school environment.

Headteachers and Leaders

- Ensure adequate training and risk assessments are completed relating to the use of restrictive interventions

- Have high expectations of behaviour management across each of our schools
- Continued investment in staff training and professional development to ensure effective communication strategies & de-escalation techniques
- Ensure all staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to this policy, particularly with recording and reporting incidents.
- Ensuring that incidents are reported and recorded on the same day and in writing.
- Ensuring that the policy is made available to all staff, pupils and parents to ensure full transparency and trust across our school communities.
- Leaders should regularly 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 Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, 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.
- Following an incident, leaders should also hold a follow-up conversation(s) to facilitate reflection, learning and to support pupil and staff wellbeing and foster a culture of continuous improvement. This process should ideally be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident and may also benefit from the presence of an additional person to ensure impartiality and support.
- Any injuries sustained by a pupil or staff member, should be recorded in accordance with the school's procedures and reported as appropriate to the SLT and via MyConcern or First Aid Reporting (if First Aid was administered).
- Schools should continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed, for example through further follow-up conversations, counselling or other resources, for those who are either involved or have witnessed, the use of restrictive interventions.
- Where a pupil has a disability, our schools are legally obliged, under the Equality Act 2010, to support pupils with any reasonable adjustments, making sure they can benefit from what the school offers.
- Where a pupil has a behaviour support plan, additional time, space and strategies can be agreed to help calm behaviour prior to escalation.
- The School will continue to work closely with parents/carers to support individual pupils.

Trustees

- 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.
- Ensure that the procedure is compliant

- Leaders are upholding their duties in ensuring all incidents are reported and recorded, no later than the same day.
- That incidents are reporting and recorded in writing.
- That reporting and recording guidelines are being appropriately followed for use of restrictive interventions, seclusion or restraint incidents that occur without the use of direct physical contact.
- should regularly review and interrogate 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 to better 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 and allegations

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 and please contact the Governance Professional for guidance: governance.professional@veritasmat.co.uk.

Links to other policies

Please also refer to:

- *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*
- *Behaviour Policy*
- *Complaints Policy*
- *Staff Code of Conduct*

