



**Inspiring Primaries
Academy Trust**

Inspiring all to flourish and succeed

Use of Reasonable Force Policy

Reviewed by ELT: March 2026

The Board of Trustees reviewed and adopted this policy on: 01.04.2026

To be reviewed (Three year cycle): Spring 2029 or earlier if required

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Rationale

Inspiring Primaries Academy Trust (IPAT) is committed to ensuring that all staff act professionally and lawfully when responding to incidents involving unsafe, aggressive or highly disruptive behaviour. Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, will only be used as a last resort, where necessary to protect pupils, staff or others from harm, prevent serious damage to property, or prevent serious disorder.

Any use of restrictive intervention will take place within the context of a respectful and supportive relationship with the pupil and will be reasonable, proportionate and time-limited. The Trust is committed to minimising risk of injury and distress to pupils and staff and to learning from incidents in order to reduce future need.

This policy reflects statutory duties and national requirements in force from April 2026, including mandatory duties relating to the recording and reporting of significant incidents involving use of force, and the recording and reporting of seclusion and restraint incidents.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Maintain the safety and welfare of pupils, staff and visitors
- Prevent serious injury, disorder or damage to property
- Promote positive behaviour support and reduce reliance on restrictive interventions
- Ensure any use of restrictive intervention is lawful, necessary and proportionate
- Ensure statutory recording and reporting duties are met consistently across the Trust
- Support reflective practice, staff wellbeing and continuous improvement

Definitions

Restrictive intervention

Any intervention that prevents, restricts or subdues movement of a pupil's body (or part of the body).

Reasonable force

Physical contact or intervention used to prevent harm or serious disorder, using no more force than is necessary and for the shortest time required.

Significant incident (use of force)

Any incident where force goes beyond everyday or appropriate physical contact (for example guiding or escorting), including where physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

For avoidance of doubt, any physical restraint, any use of force beyond guiding or escorting, any use of force in response to dysregulation, or any intervention where a pupil is prevented from leaving will be treated as a significant incident for recording and reporting purposes. Schools will err on the side of recording and reporting.

Recording supports transparency, safeguarding oversight and prevention, and does not indicate that restrictive intervention is routine or acceptable practice.

Restraint

A non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises a pupil or limits their movement, with or without physical contact.

Seclusion

A non-disciplinary intervention in which a pupil is confined away from others and prevented from leaving, either physically or by being led to believe they will be punished if they leave. This includes situations where staff actions or instructions would reasonably be understood by the pupil as preventing them from leaving.

Legal Context and Principles

The use of reasonable force and restrictive interventions in schools in England is governed by statute, statutory guidance and established principles of criminal, civil, equality and human rights law. Any use of force must be lawful, necessary, proportionate and exercised in the best interests of the child.

Statutory power to use reasonable force

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (section 93) provides school staff with a statutory power to use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from committing an offence, causing injury to themselves or others, damaging property, or prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline.

This power applies on school premises and in other contexts where staff have lawful charge of pupils (such as educational visits). Corporal punishment is expressly prohibited and unlawful.

Statutory guidance on restrictive interventions

From April 2026, schools must have regard to statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Education on restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force. This guidance:

- Defines restrictive intervention, restraint and seclusion
- Clarifies lawful and unlawful practice
- Introduces statutory duties to record and report significant incidents involving force and all seclusion and restraint incidents
- Requires timely written notification to parents, subject to safeguarding exceptions
- Emphasises that intervention must be the least restrictive option for the shortest necessary time

Safeguarding and welfare duties

All decisions regarding restrictive intervention must be taken within the context of safeguarding duties and the overarching principle that the welfare of the child is paramount. Staff must consider physical safety, emotional wellbeing, trauma, vulnerability and the potential impact of intervention on the pupil.

Criminal and civil law

The use of force is subject to criminal law and the law of tort. Force that is excessive, unreasonable or punitive may constitute an assault and expose both the individual and the Trust to liability. Reasonableness will be judged objectively based on the circumstances as perceived at the time.

The occurrence of injury or distress does not of itself render an intervention unlawful if the decision and execution were reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances.

Human rights and equality law

Schools must act compatibly with the Human Rights Act 1998, including rights relating to dignity and freedom from degrading treatment.

Schools must also comply with the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and to avoid discrimination arising from disability. Particular care is required where behaviour is linked to SEND, trauma, communication or sensory needs.

When Restrictive Intervention May Be Used

Staff may use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from:

- Harming themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence

- Causing serious damage to property
- Engaging in behaviour that causes serious disorder

Any decision must be based on professional judgement and informed by the individual circumstances, including the pupil's age, needs, known vulnerabilities and the immediacy of risk.

Judgement and Decision-Making

When considering whether to use restrictive intervention, staff must assess:

- The seriousness of the potential harm if no action is taken
- Whether the desired outcome can be achieved by other means
- The risks of using force compared with not intervening

Staff must consider whether the intervention is necessary, proportionate and welfare-led, and whether it represents the least restrictive option available. Staff must remain alert to the risk of overly restrictive responses and must continually reassess whether the intervention remains necessary and proportionate.

The requirement to consider alternatives does not require staff to delay action where, in their professional judgement, delay would increase the risk of harm.

Unacceptable Use of Force

The following are not permitted:

- Use of force as a punishment
- Any restraint that restricts breathing, circulation or airway
- Pressure to the neck, chest or abdomen
- Deliberate prone restraint or actions that keep a pupil on the ground
- Techniques involving pain compliance or deliberate joint locks

Restrictive intervention must not be used to deny a pupil access to basic needs (including toilet access, hydration, medication) or essential assistive devices, except where there is an immediate and serious risk of harm that cannot be managed by less restrictive means.

If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff must reposition or release as soon as it is safe to do so.

Other Physical Contact

The Trust does not operate a “no-contact” approach. Appropriate physical contact may be necessary, for example:

- First aid
- Supporting access or mobility
- Guiding or escorting for safety
- Comforting a distressed pupil

Such contact must always be professional, appropriate and in line with safeguarding expectations.

Parents or staff may not require schools to agree never to use reasonable force, as this could prevent lawful intervention to protect safety.

Use of Physical Interventions

Restrictive physical intervention must only be used after preventative and de-escalation strategies have been attempted, unless immediate danger requires urgent action.

Where practicable:

- The pupil should be warned that physical intervention may be used
- Communication should remain calm and supportive
- Intervention should cease as soon as it is no longer necessary

Only techniques in which staff have received appropriate training may be used. Staff must not use techniques they have not been trained to use. Where foreseeable risk exists, staff should seek assistance from trained colleagues.

Where more than one adult is involved, a lead member of staff will coordinate the intervention to minimise duration, ensure communication and reduce risk.

In emergencies involving immediate risk of serious harm, staff may take reasonable action consistent with the principles of this policy. Lack of specific training in a particular scenario does not remove the statutory power to act where immediate action is required to prevent serious harm.

Seclusion

Seclusion may only be used as a safety measure, not as a disciplinary sanction, where a pupil is experiencing acute dysregulation and poses an immediate risk to others.

During seclusion:

- The pupil must be supervised at all times through continuous and active supervision appropriate to the level of risk
- The supervising adult must be able to intervene immediately
- Doors must not be locked as part of seclusion
- The environment must be safe, dignified, risk-assessed and suitable
- Seclusion must not take place in spaces that are unsafe, overly confined, unsanitary, or could reasonably be experienced as humiliating or punitive

Staff must review the necessity of seclusion at least every five minutes (or more frequently where risk indicates), record each review point, and end seclusion as soon as the immediate risk has reduced.

All seclusion incidents must be recorded and reported in line with this policy.

Preventative Approaches

The Trust expects schools to prioritise prevention through positive behaviour support, inclusive practice, skilled de-escalation and effective staff training, as set out in each school's behaviour policy.

Staff Authorisation and Training

All staff have a legal power to use reasonable force, but this must be exercised responsibly and as a last resort.

Schools must ensure:

- Staff likely to intervene are appropriately trained
- Training is refreshed regularly
- Risk assessments are in place
- Records of trained staff are maintained

School leaders are responsible for monitoring the quality and appropriateness of practice and addressing concerns through support, retraining or other management action.

Schools will ensure that practice, training and reporting arrangements are reviewed against statutory guidance at least annually, or sooner if guidance changes.

Positive Handling / Behaviour Support Plans

Pupils at increased risk of requiring restrictive intervention must have a Positive Handling or Behaviour Support Plan.

Plans must be reviewed at least termly and following any significant incident.

Pupils with SEND

The Trust recognises that behaviour may arise from unmet needs, trauma, communication difficulties or sensory processing differences.

Restrictive intervention must not be used as a substitute for appropriate assessment, provision or reasonable adjustments.

Following any significant incident, or repeated incidents, schools must consider whether additional reasonable adjustments are required and whether Behaviour Support or Positive Handling Plans need to be created or amended. Reviews will consider whether the behaviour indicates unmet need, whether additional assessment or specialist advice is required, and whether current support strategies remain appropriate. This review must be recorded.

Recording and Reporting

(Statutory from April 2026)

Recording

Schools must record:

- Every significant incident involving use of force
- Every seclusion or restraint incident

Each school will maintain a central restrictive interventions log using Trust-approved categories to enable monitoring, analysis and governance oversight.

The member(s) of staff involved must complete the written record as soon as practicable and normally the same day. Where same-day completion is not possible, the record must be completed no later than the next working day, with the reason for delay recorded.

Records must be completed contemporaneously and include, where appropriate:

- Preventative and de-escalation strategies attempted and why these were insufficient
- The pupil's account

- Any staff witness accounts

Records must include:

- Names of pupil and staff involved
- Date, time, location and duration
- Relevant needs, including SEND status
- Description of incident and justification
- Type of intervention or holds used, and degree of force applied (brief, factual, e.g. guiding, blocking, holding limbs, duration, resistance encountered)
- Any injuries and post-incident support

The Head of School (or delegated senior leader) must quality-assure the record within 24 hours (or the next working day).

Records will be stored securely and retained in line with the Trust's information governance and retention schedule.

Reporting to Parents

Parents must be informed in writing as soon as practicable and normally the same day.

Written notification to parents will include, as a minimum:

- The date, time, location and duration of the incident
- The reason the use of force was considered necessary
- The type and degree of force used
- Any injuries or medical attention provided
- Details of post-incident support and next steps

Where same-day reporting is not practicable, the reason must be recorded and parents informed at the earliest opportunity (normally the next working day).

For these duties, "parent" includes any person with parental responsibility and any local authority providing accommodation for the pupil. Schools will verify parental responsibility and any contact restrictions before issuing notifications.

Where reporting would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil, the decision must be taken by the Head of School, following consultation with the DSL where practicable. The decision and rationale must be recorded, and reporting made to any parent(s) it can safely be reported to, or otherwise to the relevant local authority.

Post-Incident Support

Following an incident:

- Pupils and staff will be checked for injury
- First aid or medical care will be provided

Any reported pain, visible injury, breathing difficulty, head impact or prolonged distress following restrictive intervention will trigger immediate first-aid assessment and, where indicated, medical escalation. This will be recorded and parents informed.

Emotional support and debriefing will be offered and support plans reviewed and updated.

Governance and Oversight

Heads of School will report termly to governance on restrictive interventions, including frequency, patterns, repeat incidents, injuries, timeliness of recording and reporting, and any disproportionate impact by SEND, disability or other vulnerability.

Triggers for escalation include repeated incidents involving the same pupil, repeat involvement of the same staff member, injury, use of restraint or seclusion, or disproportionate impact linked to SEND or disability.

Where governance identifies concerning patterns or disproportionality, it will require a written action plan and follow-up assurance from school leaders.

Complaints and Allegations

Concerns will be addressed through the Trust's [complaints procedure](#).

Where an allegation meets the threshold for managing allegations against staff, safeguarding procedures will be followed and appropriate external advice sought. Where appropriate, investigations will be conducted by a senior leader not directly involved in the incident.

Appendix A – Key Legislation, Regulations and Statutory Guidance

Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Section 93)

Provides the statutory power for school staff in England to use reasonable force in limited circumstances to prevent a pupil from committing an offence, causing injury, damaging property, or prejudicing good order and discipline. Confirms that any force must be reasonable in the circumstances.

Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (England) Regulations 2025

Introduce mandatory duties (effective from April 2026) for schools to record and report incidents involving seclusion and restraint, including minimum recording expectations and parent notification requirements, subject to safeguarding-led exceptions.

Statutory guidance on restrictive interventions (Secretary of State for Education)

Statutory guidance effective from April 2026 that schools must have regard to. It sets expectations for lawful practice, including that restrictive intervention is a last resort, used in the least restrictive way for the shortest time, and clarifies how incidents should be recorded and reported.

Human Rights Act 1998

Requires public bodies (including schools) to act compatibly with Convention rights. In this context, it informs requirements around dignity, proportionality, and protection from inhuman or degrading treatment, particularly where restrictive intervention or seclusion is used.

Equality Act 2010

Sets duties to avoid unlawful discrimination and to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils. In this context, it requires schools to consider whether behaviour is linked to disability/SEND, ensure adjustments are in place, and avoid disproportionate use of restrictive intervention.

Common Law Duty of Care

Requires schools and staff to take reasonable steps to protect pupils from foreseeable harm and to act in pupils' best interests. In this context, it supports the expectation that staff intervene to prevent serious harm while using only proportionate, necessary measures.