"Put your heart and soul into everything that you do."
Purpose. Passion. Success.

Restrictive Interventions and Positive Handling Policy

This policy replaces the previous Positive Handling Policy based on the 2013 DfE guidance. It reflects the DfE guidance Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools, effective from 1 April 2026, including the new statutory recording and reporting duties.

1. Purpose and ethos

Pattishall CE Primary School is committed to providing a calm, safe and inclusive environment in which pupils and adults are treated with dignity and respect. Restrictive intervention is never a behaviour strategy in itself and is never used as punishment. Our first response is prevention, co-regulation, de-escalation, adaptation and positive relationships.

This policy supports our school vision of Purpose, Passion and Success and our inclusive approach. It should be read alongside the Nurturing Positive Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy, SEND Policy, Health and Safety Policy, First Aid Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Complaints Policy and the school's searching and confiscation procedures.

The aims are to:

- keep pupils, staff and visitors safe;
- reduce the need for restrictive interventions through prevention, de-escalation and reasonable adjustments;
- ensure any use of force or other restrictive intervention is lawful, necessary, proportionate and used for the least amount of time;
- protect pupils' dignity, welfare and rights, with particular regard to SEND, communication, medical needs and past trauma;
- ensure incidents are recorded, reported, reviewed and learned from; and
- support pupils, families and staff after incidents and repair relationships.

2. Legal and guidance framework

This policy has been updated with regard to the following legislation and national guidance:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, sections 93 and 93A (power to use reasonable force and the duty to record/report significant incidents);
- Education Act 1996, sections 550ZA and 550ZB (searching powers);
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025;
- Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments and the Public Sector Equality Duty;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- Children and Families Act 2014 and SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years;
- DfE, Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools (effective 1 April 2026);
- DfE, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (effective 1 September 2026; KCSIE 2025 applies until 31 August 2026);
- DfE, Behaviour in Schools (February 2024);
- DfE, Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools (current guidance); and
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026).

3. Key definitions

Term	Meaning
Restrictive intervention	An umbrella term for physical or non-physical actions intended to prevent, restrict or subdue the movement of a pupil's body or part of their body.
Reasonable force	Physical restrictive intervention. Reasonable means

	using no more force than is necessary, for the least amount of time, according to the circumstances.
Significant incident	Any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff. If staff are unsure whether an incident is significant, it should be recorded.
Restraint	A non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits movement. It may involve direct physical contact or may be non-physical, for example removal of a walking aid.
Seclusion	A non-disciplinary intervention in which a pupil is kept away from others and prevented from leaving by physical obstruction, blocking or a belief that they will be punished if they leave.
Appropriate physical contact	Ordinary, proportionate contact that is proper and necessary in context, such as first aid, comforting a distressed child, guiding a willing pupil, congratulating a pupil, or demonstrating a PE or musical technique.

4. Minimising the need for restrictive intervention

Restrictive intervention is a last resort. Staff should use the least restrictive response that is likely to keep people safe. Whole-school preventative practice includes:

- clear routines, predictable expectations and a calm, nurturing approach;
- positive relationships, active listening and respectful communication;
- adaptive teaching and reasonable adjustments so pupils can access learning successfully;
- recognising early signs of distress, anxiety, sensory overload or escalation;
- offering time, space, choice, movement, regulation strategies and access to a quieter area;
- using low-arousal language, appropriate tone, reduced verbal demand and adequate processing time;
- removing unnecessary audiences, stimuli or hazards and seeking additional adult support;
- using restorative approaches after incidents and teaching pupils alternative ways to communicate and regulate;
- using information from pupil voice, parents, SEND plans, medical advice, ELSA/MHST and other professionals where relevant; and
- reviewing patterns of incidents to improve provision rather than simply repeating the same response.

5. SEND, vulnerability and individual planning

Pupils with SEND, communication difficulties, sensory needs, medical conditions, mental health needs or previous trauma may be more vulnerable to restrictive intervention and may experience it as particularly distressing. Staff must consider relevant reasonable adjustments and the pupil's welfare and dignity.

For pupils where restrictive intervention is reasonably foreseeable, the school will consider an individual risk assessment and Positive Handling / Behaviour Support Plan, co-produced where appropriate with the pupil, parents/carers and relevant professionals. Plans should identify:

- known triggers, early warning signs and communication preferences;
- sensory, medical, physical or emotional factors that may increase risk;
- proactive adjustments and de-escalation strategies;
- how the pupil can communicate distress, ask for space or access regulation;
- staffing and environmental arrangements;
- any circumstances in which increased physical contact may be reasonably anticipated and the agreed parameters;
- known risks or contraindications; and
- post-incident support and review arrangements.

A plan does not give blanket permission to use force or seclusion. Each incident must still be assessed on its own circumstances. Plans and risk assessments will be reviewed periodically and after any significant incident.

6. When reasonable force may be used

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances. The decision rests with the member of staff and must be based on the circumstances at the time. Reasonable force may be used to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- causing injury to themselves or another person;
- committing a criminal offence;
- damaging property; or
- causing disorder among pupils at school, during a teaching session or otherwise.

Before and during any intervention, staff should consider four questions:

1. Is it necessary? Are there safer or less restrictive options likely to work?
2. Is it proportionate? Use the least force/restriction necessary for the least time.
3. What are this pupil’s individual circumstances? Consider age, size, SEND, communication, medical needs, trauma, protected characteristics and reasonable adjustments.
4. What is the impact on welfare and dignity? Explain calmly what is happening where possible, protect privacy and stop/reduce the intervention as soon as the risk has reduced.

7. Unacceptable use of force and unsafe practice

The following principles are non-negotiable:

- Force must never be used as a punishment or to humiliate, intimidate or cause pain as a means of compliance.
- A pupil must not be restrained in a way that affects the airway, breathing or circulation, including covering the mouth/nose or applying pressure to the neck or abdomen.
- Ground restraint carries particular risk and should be avoided. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release or reposition to a safer/standing position as quickly as possible.
- An intervention must stop as soon as it is no longer necessary or proportionate.
- Staff must not use a technique for which they are not competent, except that an immediate emergency does not remove a staff member’s lawful power to take reasonable action to prevent harm.
- The school does not use locked seclusion rooms. Pupils must not be left alone during seclusion.

Any pupil or staff member who may have been injured should receive appropriate first aid/medical assessment as soon as possible. Injuries will also be recorded and reported under the school’s health and safety procedures, including RIDDOR where applicable.

8. Seclusion and removal from class

Seclusion is not a disciplinary sanction. It 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. It must not be threatened as a punishment.

- The space must be safe and should not feel threatening or intimidating.
- The pupil must be supervised at all times.
- The pupil must be allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced.
- Every seclusion incident must be recorded and reported under section 11 of this policy.

A pupil choosing to use a calm space, or being directed to another supervised learning space as a behaviour measure, is not seclusion if they are not prevented from leaving. Removal from class is managed under the Nurturing Positive Behaviour Policy and Behaviour in Schools guidance.

9. Use of force when searching

The Headteacher and authorised staff have statutory searching powers in defined circumstances. Reasonable force may only be used to search for legally prohibited items where the law permits it; force must not be used to search for

an item that is banned only by school rules. Any search must follow the current DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools guidance and the school's safeguarding procedures.

10. Appropriate physical contact

Pattishall does not operate a "no contact" policy. Appropriate, sensitive physical contact can be important to children's safety, care, learning and wellbeing. Examples may include:

- giving first aid or supporting a child with an agreed medical/personal care need;
- holding a young child's hand when moving safely around school or on a visit;
- guiding or escorting a willing pupil, including to a self-regulation space they have chosen;
- comforting a distressed pupil where this is appropriate for that child;
- congratulating or praising a pupil; and
- demonstrating a musical, PE or sports technique.

Staff should always use professional judgement and consider the child's age, wishes, SEND/vulnerabilities, cultural factors, safeguarding context and whether a non-contact alternative is preferable.

11. Recording and reporting incidents

From 1 April 2026 there are statutory duties relating to recording and reporting significant use of force, seclusion and restraint. Pattishall will use one clear procedure so staff and families know what to expect.

What must be recorded

Every significant incident of force, and every incident of seclusion or restraint (including restraint without direct physical contact), must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable. Staff involved should endeavour to complete the record on the same day. The school will use its designated Restrictive Intervention Record / approved incident recording system. Where there is also a safeguarding concern, the safeguarding record will be updated in accordance with the Child Protection Policy.

The record will include, as a minimum:

- the names of the pupil and staff directly involved;
- relevant needs/circumstances, including identified SEND and SEN status where applicable;
- date, time, location and approximate duration;
- what happened beforehand, including known/potential triggers and prevention/de-escalation attempted;
- the type and degree of force/restriction used, where relevant;
- why the intervention was assessed as necessary and proportionate;
- any injury or adverse impact; and
- first aid, medical treatment, debrief, wellbeing support and other follow-up.

The pupil's account, witness accounts, parent notification and subsequent changes to plans should also be recorded where appropriate.

Reporting to parents/carers

Parents/carers will be informed as soon as practicable after every significant use of force, seclusion or restraint incident, and staff should endeavour to do this on the same day. The school will provide the information in writing. For seclusion or restraint, as a maintained school, the school will supply a copy of the written record to parents. Where a restraint incident is also a significant use of force, one clear written report is sufficient; duplicate reporting is not required.

The reporting duty applies even where an intervention was anticipated in an agreed plan. The only relevant exception for a primary-aged pupil is where informing a parent is assessed as likely to result in serious harm to the pupil; in that circumstance the statutory alternative reporting route will be followed and the DSL/Headteacher will be involved.

12. Post-incident support, debrief and learning

After an incident, the immediate priority is physical and emotional safety. As soon as practicable:

- the pupil and staff involved will be checked for injury and offered appropriate medical attention;
- the pupil will be offered a developmentally appropriate opportunity to give their account and express how they felt;
- staff involved will have an opportunity to reflect and receive support;
- where appropriate, a restorative follow-up will help repair relationships;
- the incident will be reviewed to identify triggers, whether agreed strategies were followed, what worked, what did not and what should change;
- any Positive Handling / Behaviour Support Plan and risk assessment will be amended if necessary; and
- pupils who witnessed a distressing incident will be supported where needed.

Where possible, debriefing should include a staff member not directly involved in the incident to support reflection and learning.

13. Staff training and support

All staff will receive information about this policy, prevention, de-escalation, safeguarding and their legal powers and responsibilities. Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions will be identified through risk assessment and will receive appropriate practical training in safe and lawful practice. Pattishall currently uses Team Teach training where appropriate to role and identified need; refresher training will follow provider requirements and school risk assessment.

Planned restrictive interventions should be carried out by appropriately trained staff wherever reasonably practicable. Training does not replace professional judgement: techniques must always be necessary, proportionate, respectful of dignity and consistent with this policy.

14. Safeguarding concerns, complaints and allegations

A complaint about the use of restrictive intervention will be considered under the school's Complaints Policy. Where a concern or allegation suggests that a member of staff may have harmed a child, may have posed a risk of harm, or may have acted inappropriately, the school will follow Keeping Children Safe in Education and local LADO procedures. Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold will be managed under the school's low-level concerns procedures.

The fact that physical contact or restraint occurred does not in itself mean that staff acted improperly. Any assessment will take account of the legal power to use reasonable force, the circumstances, the pupil's needs and the principles in this policy. Suspension is not an automatic response and will be considered in line with KCSIE.

15. Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Body will:

- ensure the school has compliant recording and reporting procedures and take reasonable steps to ensure they are followed;
- review this policy at least annually;
- receive proportionate termly information about restrictive interventions, including themes, injuries, repeat incidents and actions taken;
- consider whether use is disproportionate for pupils with SEND, protected characteristics or other vulnerabilities, while recognising the limitations of small-cohort data; and
- challenge leaders on prevention, training, pupil welfare and the impact of improvements.

The Headteacher / senior leaders will:

- implement the policy and ensure staff understand it;
- identify training needs and ensure appropriate risk assessments and individual plans are in place;
- ensure statutory records and parent reports are completed promptly;
- oversee post-incident review and support; and
- analyse patterns and take action to reduce future restrictive interventions.

All staff will:

- use prevention and de-escalation first wherever possible;
- act within the law and use the least restrictive option for the least time;
- consider SEND, medical needs, communication, trauma, dignity and reasonable adjustments;
- seek help where possible and avoid unsafe techniques;
- record/report incidents promptly; and
- participate openly in debrief, review and learning.

16. Monitoring, data protection and review

Incident records contain personal and sometimes special-category data. They will be stored securely, shared only where there is a lawful need, and retained in accordance with the school’s records retention and data protection arrangements.

Senior leaders will review incidents at least half-termly where incidents have occurred. Governors will review anonymised/aggregated information at least termly. Monitoring will consider frequency, duration, location, triggers, injuries, pupil/staff wellbeing, repeat patterns, SEND/protected characteristics, training needs, and whether preventative strategies are reducing the need for restrictive intervention.

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner if national guidance or law changes, monitoring identifies a concern, or a significant incident indicates that practice should change.

KEY MESSAGE

Prevent -> De-escalate -> Least restrictive response -> Protect dignity -> Record -> Report -> Reflect -> Improve

Appendix: Core reference documents

- Department for Education: Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools (effective from 1 April 2026).
- Department for Education: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (effective from 1 September 2026).
- Department for Education: Behaviour in Schools (February 2024).
- Department for Education: Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools (current guidance).
- Department for Education / Department of Health and Social Care: Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention (2019) - particularly useful for SEND-related planning.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026).