

Leverton Church of England Academy



Restrictive Intervention & Reasonable Force Policy

April 2026

Statement of Intent

At Leverton C of E Academy our Christian vision shapes all we do. We provide our children with the opportunities to flourish spiritually, academically and as confident individuals. We believe that all children deserve to be treated with dignity and respect by all. To achieve this, the school recognises that, in certain circumstances, there will be the need to contain risky behaviour through control and physical intervention may be necessary.

The school understands that behaviour is often a means of communication which may signal that a pupil is in need of support but does not know how to express this; therefore, the school takes a proactive approach to anticipating, managing and minimising potential triggers of distressed behaviour that may cause harm.

This policy acknowledges that situations may arise in which staff members will be required to use restrictive intervention, and in some cases reasonable force, in order to handle pupils' emotions or aggressive behaviour when other measures have failed to do so.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that physical intervention is used in a correct and safe manner, which is in accordance with the relevant legislation and national guidance.

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 2011
- Children Act 1989
- Equality Act 2010
- DfE (2016) 'Restrictive Intervention, including the use of reasonable force, in schools'
- DfE (2026) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
- DfE (2025) 'Keeping children safe in education 2025'
- HM Government (2019) 'Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedures
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

- Safeguarding and Welfare of Pupils Policy

Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Monitoring the overall impact of this policy.
- Evaluating the records of restrictive intervention and reasonable force to analyse how and when positive handling is used and identify any trends.
- Reviewing the policy every two years or in line with legislation updates.
- Responding to any complaints, in liaison with the Headteacher, from pupils or parents regarding the use of reasonable force.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Deciding whether members of staff require additional training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities, considering the needs of pupils.
- Ensuring all members of staff understand the correct conduct in terms of positive handling.
- Maintaining an overview of when positive handling has been used and ensuring the governing body are able to access this for evaluation.
- Ensuring any member of staff who uses reasonable force documents this in a timely manner.
- Responding to any complaints, in liaison with the Trust and Governing Body from pupils or parents regarding the use of reasonable force.

The SENCO is responsible for:

- Ensuring staff are suitably trained on how to handle pupils with SEND.
- Ensuring staff understand how pupils with SEND may react differently to reasonable force.
- Ensuring staff understand the additional vulnerability of pupils with SEND or medical conditions.
- Ensure that individual behaviour plans/health care plans/personal evacuation plans/personal risk assessments are in place where necessary, are agreed with the pupils parents and staff are aware of these.
- Ensuring that staff understand how reasonable force principles may need to be adapted for pupils with medical conditions.

The DSL is responsible for:

- Providing staff with annual refreshers on reasonable force training where the Headteacher deems this necessary.
- Ensuring all members of staff use reasonable force in accordance with this policy.
- Reviewing this policy in liaison with the Headteacher and Governing Body.

Terminology

The DfE guidance outline the following terminology that is related to this policy:

Restrictive intervention: a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This guidance uses 'restrictive interventions' as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways.

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.

Significant incident: any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff as described in 'Other physical contact with pupils' within this document. This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

Seclusion: a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others, and preventing them from leaving either by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave.

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.

For the purposes of this policy, 'positive handling' refers to the application of force with the intention of protecting pupils and limiting damage to property. Legal framework and national guidance often refer to the 'use of force' – this policy uses the term 'positive handling' whenever possible.

Positive handling is used in our school to:

- Restrain a pupil who has lost emotional self-control until the situation is diffused.
- Limit the amount of harm that the pupil involved can do to themselves or others.
- Demonstrate to pupils that they are within a safe environment in which adults can contain pupils' anger and other erratic emotions.
- Protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful.
- Positive handling will be limited to emergency situations and used only as a last resort

Where positive handling is required, the school will abide to the following guidance:

- Staff's initial response will be to DIVERT, DISTRACT or DOWNPLAY in order to restore some calm and prevent situations escalating
- Staff will follow any risk assessments in place for specific pupils and use positive language with children
- Staff will take a calm and measured approach in all situations
- Staff will follow the guidance provided by the Containing Risky Behaviour training where possible to provide differing levels of positive handling from low level through to high level, dependent on the situation
- Staff will record the details of any need for physical intervention as mentioned further in this policy
- Positive handling does not take place in a form which could be seen as a punishment
- Positive handling will be applied as an act of care and control with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the pupil to regain self-control

What is reasonable force?

There is no statutory definition of reasonable force, it will always depend on what is considered as necessary and proportionate, given the circumstances of the case. The use of reasonable force is only acceptable to 'control' pupils or to 'physically restrain' which involves using no more force than is needed in the circumstance.

'Control' refers to either passive physical contact, such as blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by their arm.

'Restraint' refers to physically intervening which may result in holding them back. This is typically used in more extreme circumstances, such as to prevent a pupil/staff member being physically hurt. The degree of force will depend on the pupil's circumstances for example their age.

Staff members will always use actions that are appropriate and in proportion to the circumstances of the incident. All incidents that involve the use of reasonable force will be reported to the Headteacher, recorded using the CPOMS online proforma and communicated to the pupil's parents.

The following list is not exhaustive, but provides examples of situations where the school may decide to use reasonable force.

Members of staff need to control pupils risking the safety of themselves or others outside of school premises where the same range of support options are not available, e.g. on school trips.

- Members of staff must prevent a pupil from leaving an area, e.g. the classroom or school grounds, where doing so would risk their safety or the safety of others.
- A pupil is attacking a member of staff or another pupil.
- A pupil is at serious risk of harming themselves and a member of staff must intervene to prevent this.
- Disruptive children must be removed from the classroom and are refusing instructions to leave.
- The headteacher or authorised staff are conducting a search for items prohibited under the Education Act 1996, e.g. knives and weapons, alcohol, and illegal drugs.

Use of positive handling and reasonable force

- All members of staff will be permitted to use positive handling where they believe it to be appropriate, as long as all necessary precautions are taken.
- The decision to physically intervene during a situation is down to professional judgement of the member of staff and always depends on circumstances
- Staff will always calmly communicate the reasons for their actions to the pupil and explain why it is necessary in a non-threatening manner
- Staff will never give the impression that they are acting out of anger or are punishing a child
- All staff members will develop strategies and techniques for dealing with difficult pupils and situations, which they will use to diffuse and calm a situation
- In non-urgent situations, staff will always try and deal with a situation through other strategies before using force

- Staff members will always avoid acting in a way that could cause injury, however, dependant on the circumstances, this may not be possible
- Where a member of staff believes that they are at risk, such as where an injury is likely to occur, they will not intervene in an incident without help and assistance from another staff member
- Emergency intervention is necessary when there is a high risk of pupils being injured or property being damaged
- If emergency intervention is required, a member of staff will use other methods of defusing the situation, without physically intervening, until assistance arrives
- Following the event, the pupil may require additional consequences to their behaviour to prevent reoccurrence of such incidents
- Where necessary, external agencies such as behaviour partnerships, Local authority colleagues or the police will be notified of the incident
- All physical interventions will follow the guidance as provided on the certified training courses

Pupils with SEND

The school will have due consideration to the risks posed by the additional vulnerability of pupils with SEND in terms of physical intervention and reasonable force.

The SENCO will ensure that the stipulations of the Equality Act 2010 are adhered to in relation to reasonable adjustments, non-discrimination and the Public Sector Equality Duty, and will ensure that staff that come into regular contact with pupils with SEND are aware of the ways in which their needs can be met without reasonable force.

The school is aware that pupils with SEND may sometimes experience meltdowns, which can sometimes manifest in behaviour which may be aggressive or seem uncontrollable. Where it is known that a pupil is prone to meltdowns, the SENCO and Headteacher will draft a risk assessment to determine planned strategies for managing the pupil's meltdowns that are tailored to the pupil's specific needs, to avoid the use of reasonable force. These risk assessments will be conducted in collaboration with the pupil and their parents, where appropriate. Some pupils with SEND may require physical intervention when they feel overwhelmed or stressed, e.g. a tight hug; however, this will be discussed as part of relevant risk assessments.

Staff members will not assume that a technique employed for one pupil with SEND will be applicable to other pupils with SEND.

Staff will also be aware that pupils with SEND may engage in frequent, repetitive self-stimulatory behaviour, known as 'stimming', and that some pupils may engage in self-injurious stimming, e.g. repeatedly hitting or scratching themselves. While this can be alarming, staff will be aware that stimming is often carried out as a means of emotional regulation or self-soothing in response to stressful or overwhelming stimuli. Staff members will aim to remove distressing stimuli from the environment, where possible, or will support pupils to engage in less harmful stimming methods, e.g. by providing them with something to play with or demonstrating a less harmful stim, such as hand flapping.

Staff will be aware that restraining a pupil in a way that prevents them from stimming entirely can cause extreme distress and lead to further aggressive behaviour. Self-injurious stimming and tactics to support a pupil to engage in safer stims will be included as part of the pupil's risk assessment.

The school will adhere to its Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy at all times.

Post-incident support

Following an incident of reasonable force, all pupils and staff members involved will be given any necessary first aid to treat injuries as soon as possible, and emotional support.

Wherever reasonable force is used, staff members and pupils involved in incidents will be given separate opportunities to reflect on what happened.

It will be explained to the pupil involved the reason that such intervention was used, and reassured that the use of the intervention was not a punishment for their behaviour, but rather a method of defusing the situation and preventing them from harming themselves or others. The pupil will be asked about the reasons for their behaviour, including:

- Why their environment was causing such distress for them, e.g. in an instance of sensory overstimulation leading to a meltdown.
- Whether they feel there was anything that could have been done to meet their needs before the situation escalated.
- Whether, and how, staff actions were helpful or unhelpful.

Staff will be encouraged to reflect on their actions and how they handled the situation, and will be reassured, where appropriate, that they have done nothing wrong and acted in what they perceived to be the best interests of pupils.

Reporting incidents

- A detailed written report will be kept of any incidents where force is used and a log of this incident is added to the child's CPOMs record. Reports must be compiled using the 'Positive Handling Report' form on CPOMs.
- Immediately following an incident, the member of staff involved will verbally report the incident to the Headteacher and provide a comprehensive written record of the situation as soon as possible, via the form on CPOMs.
- The written report of the incident must be thorough, including as much detail as possible as to what had happened before, during and after the incident, and describing and injuries incurred due to the event.
- The Headteacher will make the decision as to whether it is appropriate to inform the pupil's parents of the details of an incident. If it is appropriate the following must be adhered to:
 - Parents will be informed in writing and a copy of this report will be given to the member of staff involved in the incident
 - The report will inform parents of their right to complain about the use of positive handling and reasonable force, in line with the complaints procedures policy
- If a member of staff witnesses or suspects the use of positive handling or reasonable force where another member of staff is actively involved in physical intervention, they will report this to the Headteacher immediately.
- Any allegations against staff will be dealt with as a matter of urgency, and in accordance with the procedures outlined in the school's Allegations against staff policy.
- The Headteacher will be responsible for conducting a thorough investigation to find out the correct details of what occurred; this may include talking to other pupils about the incident, for instance those who witnessed the event.

Complaints

- All members of staff will be fully aware of the consequences and legal retributions that can occur following the incorrect use of positive handling and force.
- All complaints regarding the use of positive handling or force will be investigated in a thorough and speedy manner
- The person making the complaint is responsible for proving that their allegations are true, and therefore, it is not for the member of staff to prove that their actions were made reasonably
- In extreme circumstances, parents may take civil action or pursue a criminal prosecution
- In the case where a member of staff has acted within the law, this will provide a defence to any civil or criminal prosecution
- Members of staff accused of using excessive force will not be automatically suspended as a result to the allegations. The following procedure will be adhered to:
 - Careful consideration will be given to whether the case warrants a person being suspended until the allegation is resolved
 - The Governing Body will always take into account whether a staff member has acted within the law when considering whether or not to take disciplinary action against a staff member involved in an incident
 - Where a member of staff is suspended, the school will ensure that the staff member has access to a named contact that can provide support and guidance
 - The school will provide pastoral care to any member of staff who is subject to a formal allegation

Where a safeguarding allegation is made against a member of staff that involves physical contact, e.g. restraint, the strategy discussion or initial evaluation with the LADO will take into account that teachers and other school staff are entitled to use reasonable force to control or restrain pupils in certain circumstances, including dealing with disruptive behaviour.

Safe touch

The school understands that the following examples are instances of safe touch which may occur between staff and pupils:

- Comforting an upset or distressed pupil
- Congratulating or praising a pupil
- Holding the hand of a pupil to guide them, such as when crossing a road or walking to assembly
- Giving first aid to a pupil
- Demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons
- Administering medicine
- Using musical instruments
- Supporting pupils with personal care (Following the intimate care policy)

The school understands that certain types of physical contact between staff and pupils are inappropriate, e.g. cuddling, lap-sitting and some instances of holding hands, and that safe touch should never be invasive, humiliating or flirtatious.

The school designates that the only appropriate places on a pupil's body to touch them are their shoulders, arms and upper back.

The school understands that pupils are not always aware of the boundaries between staff and pupils and thus may try to engage in physical contact, such as lap-sitting or inappropriate hand-holding and hugging.

Should a pupil try to engage in any inappropriate physical contact, the member of staff will explain to the pupil why it is unacceptable and encourage them to engage in the school-hug or school-hand-hold instead.

Appropriate touch involving pupils with SEND will be in line with their EHC plan or IHP.

Where it is reported that a staff member has engaged, or is suspected to have engaged, in touch that is not appropriate in line with this policy and the Staff Code of Conduct.

Staff Training

- Staff will take part in Physical Intervention training every 3 years with an annual refresher completed. This will focus on how to de-escalate situations with an emphasis on building a rapport with pupils and using the distract, divert and downplay strategies to avoid the need to physically intervene with a pupil. Effective and safe positive handling strategies and use of reasonable force will also be delivered
- All staff will be regularly reminded of the positive handling techniques employed by the school and will communicate these to the pupils they are in regular contact with.
- Only techniques and strategies that have been previously discussed with the Headteacher and DSL and have been safely demonstrated will be used.
- Staff will be made aware of the subsequent risks of their actions and fully understand when it is appropriate and necessary to use such actions.
- All staff will receive annual training on the use of appropriate holds.

Monitoring and review

- This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by the Headteacher, DSL and Governing Body, who will consider any necessary changes and communicate the findings of the review to all members of staff
- The Headteacher will review records of the use of positive handling and reasonable force on a termly basis, to analyse the frequency of occurrence and determine what further measures could be taken to prevent these situations from reoccurring