

Restrictive Interventions, Including Use of Reasonable Force Policy 2026-2027

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Restraint Policy

Introduction

1. In an emergency, staff very rarely may find it necessary to use physical restraint or reasonable force as a last resort. This policy is in place to explain what reasonable force is, who can use it, when they can use it and the follow up that should take place if it is used. The use of any force should only occur in exceptional circumstances. This policy aims to:

- Minimise the need for restrictive interventions, through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies
- Help staff feel confident in knowing how to use restrictive interventions safely, appropriately and lawfully, when they are necessary
- Clearly set out the steps for recording and reporting incidents of reasonable force, seclusion and restraint
- Protect the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all students and staff, and help create a positive and safe place for everyone at school.

Development of Policy

2. This policy has been developed in line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance "Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force" (April, 2026). Other legislation to which this guidance relates includes:

- a. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (especially sections 93 and 93A)
- b. The Independent School Standards 2026
- c. The Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- d. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations
- e. The Human Rights Act 1998
- f. The Equality Act 2010
- g. Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- h. The Education Act 1996

Terminology

3. For clarity, this policy will use the following definitions:

- **Restrictive intervention:** a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This can include both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways. Examples of restrictive intervention could include:
 - 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
- **Reasonable force:** a term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances. Reasonable means using no more force than necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances. Examples of the use of reasonable force could include:
 - A staff member guiding a pupil to safety by the arm
 - Staff breaking up a fight between pupils
 - A staff member restraining a pupil to prevent injury to the pupil, or others

- **Significant incident:** any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff (see later). 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. For example, putting a pupil into a 'holding room' until they calm down is a form of seclusion.
- **Restraint:** is a form of non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact. Examples could include:
 - A staff member holding a pupil's arms to their sides when the pupil is attempting to harm themselves or others
 - Removing a pupil's crutches

Appropriate Physical Contact with Students

4. Seaford College does not have a 'no contact' policy. We do not grant any requests by parents/carers or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions.

There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to have some physical contact with students which does not give rise to any question over the use of reasonable force or other restrictive interventions. Examples could include:

- Providing first aid to a student
- Guiding or escorting a student through a school building or on a school trip by holding their hand
- Comforting a student who is upset
- Offering congratulations or praise, such as pat on the back or a handshake
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- When demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching.

In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in any given situation, staff should use their professional judgment, and have regard to:

- The College Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- The specific circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present
- Factors including, but not limited to:
 - The student's age
 - Any known vulnerabilities, including whether the students has any special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
 - Whether any alternative strategies that don't involve physical contact can be used

Seclusion

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

At Seaford, seclusion is used only very rarely, if at all. It might be used if a student was experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. Seclusion is not used as a threat or punishment. Seclusion is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour – please see our Behaviour Policy for information or our response to misbehaviour.

During seclusion:

- The student will be secluded in a safe place that does not feel threatening or intimidating to them.
- The student will be supervised at all times.

As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the student will be allowed to leave.

Any incident involving the use of seclusion will be reported and recorded in accordance with the procedures set out in this policy.

Roles and Responsibilities

6. The Board of Governors is responsible for:
 - Reviewing and approving this policy
 - Ensuring that a procedure is in place for recording and reporting each:
 - Significant incident involving force
 - Seclusion incident
 - Restraint incident
 - Taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the processes for recording and reporting the use of force, seclusion and restraint are followed
 - Regularly reviewing and interrogating data on the use of restrictive interventions at Seaford
 - Supporting and challenging the management team to identify where changes might be needed in practice. For example:
 - If approaches have been used for some time but haven't been effective
 - If there is any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions, including in relation to students who share protected characteristics or who have SEND or other types of vulnerabilities.
7. The Head Master/Senior Deputy Head is responsible for:
 - Overall implementation and oversight of this policy
 - Making sure that the appropriate training on preventative strategies and the safe and lawful use of restrictive interventions is provided for staff who need it
 - Ensuring adequate staffing levels to support positive behaviour management
 - Monitoring incidents involving restrictive interventions, including regular review of incidents to refine and improve processes (this is likely to happen after any and every incident)
 - Ensuring compliance with recording and reporting requirements
 - Authorising staff to search a student or their belongings if they have good reason to think the student has a prohibited or banned item
 - Following the procedures set out in the Complaints Policy to deal with any complaint about the use of restrictive interventions
 - Following the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education if an allegation regarding inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive intervention is made against a member of staff.
8. All staff members are responsible for:
 - Making sure that they have read and understood the principles of this policy and any linked policies
 - Using de-escalation techniques and positive behaviour management strategies to try to minimise and prevent the need for restrictive interventions

- Accurately recording any and every seclusion incident, restraint incident and significant incident involving force that they are involved in
 - Reporting these incidents to the DSL via CPOMS
 - Recording any injuries that occur as part of an incident involving restrictive intervention, and following our health and safety policy to ensure that these are reported to the Health and Safety Executive where necessary
 - Taking part in training on preventative strategies and the safe and lawful use of restrictive interventions, if relevant to their role
 - Engaging in follow up conversations to debrief and reflect on incidents involving restrictive intervention that they were involved in, to help us understand what happened and why#
9. The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for:
- Reporting any seclusion incidents, restraint incidents and significant incidents involving force to the parents of the student(s) involved
 - Making sure records are kept securely on CPOMS, in accordance with safeguarding and data protection procedures
 - Contacting the local authority in cases where informing a student's parent/carer of the use of reasonable force, seclusion or restraint on their child would put that child at risk of significant harm.
10. The Head of Academic Access and Achievement and SENCO is responsible for:
- Working with students, parents/carers and relevant school staff to develop and review personal plans and risk reduction plans for any students with SEND where it's been identified that there is an increased likelihood of the need to use restrictive interventions
 - Ensuring staff are aware of individual student needs and associated behaviour support strategies
 - Working with staff who know students well, to identify and manage risk (such as trigger points when challenging behaviour is more likely to occur)
 - Working with students, parents/carers, staff and any other relevant professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies
 - Advising on reasonable adjustments for any students with disabilities when considering prevention and de-escalation strategies
 - Participating in the review of restrictive intervention incidents involving any student with SEND
 - Providing advice and support on the application of this policy for students with SEND
 - Contributing to staff training on SEND and behaviour management, including the use of restrictive interventions

Acceptable Uses of Force

11. All our College staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain situations.

Staff can use reasonable force to prevent or stop a student from:

- Hurting themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence
- Damaging property
- Causing disorder among students, in or out of lessons

While all staff have this power, some staff, especially those who work closely with students who might show challenging behaviour, are more likely to use it than others.

We will ensure that staff are adequately trained and that risk assessments are carried out when necessary.

Any significant incident involving the use of force will be recorded and reported in accordance with the procedures set out in this policy.

Unacceptable Uses of Force

12. It is illegal to use force on a student 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 student 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/abdomen
- Staff using force on the ground. If a student is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their hold or move into a safer position as quickly as possible.

This policy sets out the instances where staff may use reasonable force. It also provides guidance for staff on what to consider before using it.

Using Reasonable Force to Search Students

13. The Head Master and any member of staff authorised by him have a statutory power to search a student or their belongings if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a student may have a prohibited item (as listed in the DfE's searching, screening and confiscation guidance) or an item banned under the College 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 College rules only (such as mobile phones).

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 students and staff.

Prevention and De-escalation Strategies

14. Restrictive intervention is used only when necessary. We aim to minimise its use as much as possible, using both whole-school and individual approaches.

Our whole-school approach includes:

- Consideration of how our school and classroom environment can support all students to achieve and thrive
- Sharing best practice for whole-class behaviour management, and for managing communal space such as corridors, common rooms, Walled Garden, Slopes etc.
- Training staff in effective communication strategies, such as using appropriate tone of voice and empathy to aid de-escalation
- Development of working staff-student relationships and trust

- Recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning.

The individual approaches we use include:

- Working closely with parents/carers to support individual students
- Strategies to support individual students based on their identified needs, including:
 - The development of behaviour support plans
 - Strategies to help students calm down before their behaviour escalates
 - Making 'reasonable adjustments' where a student has a disability, to help them participate in College life as fully as possible

15. When a staff member is faced with a situation where restrictive intervention may need to be used, they should consider using de-escalation techniques first, wherever possible. Techniques that could be used in these situations include:

- Having open body language and being aware of student's personal space
- Taking a student away from an 'audience' – speaking to them on their own rather than in front of a group of other students or staff
- Using empathy – asking the student to help you understand their feelings
- Distraction techniques
- Offering a calm space for the student to go to so they can self-regulate (for example No 46)
- Verbal warnings – calmly reminding the student of the consequences of their behaviour.

Deciding When the Use of Restrictive Interventions is Appropriate

16. The decision on whether to use restrictive interventions is down to the professional judgment of the staff member and will always depend on the individual circumstances of each situation.

Staff should always consider whether there are other ways to manage the situation, such as the de-escalation techniques above and/or seeking assistance from a colleague. However, there may be times when staff have no other choice but to use restrictive interventions, to reduce the risk of harm to the student and/or others.

When assessing whether a restrictive intervention is required, staff should always consider:

- Is it necessary?
 - Are there more effective, less restrictive ways to manage the situation?
 - Is a restrictive intervention likely to successfully reduce the risks, or could it escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself?
- Is it proportionate?
 - Staff should use the least amount of force or the least restrictive intervention for the least amount of time required to reduce the risks
 - If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy
 - Staff should consider the individual circumstances of the student, such as their age, size and any medical conditions, SEND or other vulnerabilities

Student and Staff Welfare

17. The most important consideration when using a restrictive intervention is the safety and wellbeing of the student involved, as well as the safety of other students and staff. Staff should always consider the potential impact on the student's welfare balanced against any actions taken. For example, staff should bear in mind that students who have experienced adverse life events, trauma

or neglect, or who have diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, communication difficulties or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.

If a restrictive intervention is needed, staff should always aim to maintain respect for a student's dignity. This includes consideration of the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.

Staff should, wherever possible, clearly and calmly communicate to the student what is happening, why and the student needs to do, including verbal and non-verbal strategies where needed, and giving time for the student to process information and respond where necessary.

Staff should seek to understand how the student is feeling and use this information to determine whether restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

18. As soon as possible after use of restrictive intervention, the College will evaluate the incident to understand why the restrictive intervention was used, the impact on students and staff, any patterns and trends, and how another incident could be avoided in the future.

The College will make sure each student and staff member involved get the right support, including a medical assessment and treatment if needed, and an opportunity to reflect on and talk through the incident.

This follow-up conversation(s) will be part of the overall debriefing process to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from all parties involved. Conversations should also aim to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue.

Wherever possible, this process will be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident. It may also include the presence of an additional person to ensure impartiality and support. The College will continue to monitor student and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed.

Depending on the circumstances, support may also be offered to those who witnessed the incident.

Considerations for Students with SEND

19. We understand that students with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Students who have difficulty communicating verbally might show their needs and discomfort through their actions.

The College is committed to understanding what might trigger challenging behaviour in students with SEND, and to providing the right support and an inclusive environment.

We will carry out risk assessments for students with SEND, where we identify that there is an increased likelihood of needing to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions. The College is aware of its duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities to avoid disadvantage and ensure they can take part in College life as fully as possible.

We will utilise staff who know individual students well to 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. We will also work with the student, their parents/carers and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

These strategies might include:

- Removing stimuli that may be causing distress to the student
- Staff members changing how they communicate with the student, such as being more mindful of body language, facial expressions and/or tone of voice
- Helping the student express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- Engaging the student in activities to help them regulate their emotions
- Distracting the student with familiar objects or activities to redirect their attention

Where appropriate, we will create individual behaviour support plans for students with SEND. The plan will be reviewed regularly, and following any significant incident, with the student and parents/carers to make sure it is still working well. The plan will

- Outline the adjustments, such as to address aspects of the College environment which the student finds challenging
- Explain the best ways to communicate with the student
- In some cases, specify when increased physical contact with staff might be appropriate. These situations will be discussed with everyone involved and clearly written down in the plan.

Training and Risk Assessments

20. The College 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 students where the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions may be required can do so as safely as possible.

Recording and Reporting Arrangements

21. We have a legal duty to record and report all:

- Significant incidents involving force
- Seclusion incidents
- Restraint incidents

22. The College has a clear process in place for recording the incidents above:

- Staff should record the incident in writing as soon as possible after the event and on the same day. They should do this even if the use of restrictive interventions is agreed as part of a student's behaviour support plan.
- This record should be uploaded to CPOMS
- A copy of this record should be sent to the Senior Deputy Head

23. For significant incidents involving force this record will include:

- The names of the student and staff members directly involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the student, including whether they have an identified SEND, and their SEN code
- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- A clear and brief description of what happened, including:
 - What led up to the incident

- Any known or potential triggers for the behaviour
 - Any preventative or de-escalation strategies used
 - The type and degree of reasonable force used
 - Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
 - A brief explanation of why using force was assessed as necessary in that situation
 - Details of any support given after the incident, such as medical help or emotional support.
24. For seclusion incidents and restraint incidents this record will include:
- The names of the student and staff members directly involved
 - Any relevant needs or circumstances of the student, including whether they have an identified SEND, and their SEN code
 - The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
 - A brief explanation of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that situation
 - Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
 - Details of any support given after the incident, such as medical help or emotional support.
25. Completed reports will be kept securely and retained in line with our data protection procedures.
26. When reporting an incident to parents/carers:
- We will inform parents/carers about an incident as soon as we can after it happens and will endeavour to do this on the same day. We will do this even if the use of restrictive interventions is agreed as part of a student's behaviour support plan.
 - The only exception to this is if the DSL believes that telling the student's parents/carers would likely result in significant harm to that student. In these cases we will report the incident to any parent/carer who it can be reported to without resulting in significant harm or, if there are none, to the local authority where the student ordinarily resides.
 - When we report significant incidents involving force to parents/carers, we will include the following details:
 - The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
 - A brief explanation of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that situation
 - A short description of the type and degree of force that was used
 - Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable

Reporting Incidents to the Local Authority

27. In cases where we have assessed that an incident needs to be reported to the local authority where the student ordinarily resides, this report will include all the information that we would normally share with the student's parents/carers, as well as the reasons why we thought it was unsafe to tell the student's parents/carers.

In cases where a student has parents/carers and is subject to a care order under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 or is being accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, we will report the incident to the relevant local authority in addition to the parents/carers (unless we deem it unsafe to inform the parents/carers).

Complaints and Allegations

28. Any complaints about the use of restrictive interventions will be handled through the College Complaints Policy, which can be found on the school website.

We take any allegation of inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions made against a member of staff very seriously. We will deal with allegations in line with the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026).