

Sutton Valence Primary School



Restrictive Interventions, Including use of Reasonable Force Policy

Date of Policy: March 2026

Review Date: March 2027

Agreed by Governors: March 2026

Introduction

Sutton Valence Primary School is committed to maintaining the safety of children and staff. Situations involving decisions about whether to use reasonable force can occur in school. This policy seeks to establish clear guidelines on the use of reasonable force by staff and acts as an important part in minimising risks associated with choosing to use or not use such actions. For any form of restraint there is a risk of physical and psychological harm, and therefore where possible we try to avoid this approach unless necessary.

Objectives

This policy seeks to:

- Ensure the safety of all children and staff.
- Prevent serious breaches of school discipline.
- Prevent serious injury to staff and/or child.
- Provide guidelines to staff when faced with situations that may require reasonable force.
- Minimising the use of reasonable force

Who can use reasonable force?

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances.

Situations where reasonable force may be used

To prevent or stop a pupil from:

1. causing injury to themselves or others (child/adult/therapy animals), including children fighting or misuse of equipment
2. committing a criminal offence
3. damaging property
4. causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or

Otherwise

Unacceptable uses of force

It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment.

Pupils should not be restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation, for example, by covering the mouth and/or nose, or applying pressure to the neck region or abdomen. Where appropriate, the pupil will receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible after the occurrence.

Other physical contact with pupils

Sutton Valence Primary is not a 'no contact' school as it is important our staff are able to intervene where reasonable in the circumstances to fully protect pupils and provide a safe and caring environment.

Examples of occasions when physical contact is generally appropriate include:

- to give first aid

- to guide or escort pupils, such as holding the hand of a pupil at the front/back of the line when going to assembly, when walking together around the school or on a school trip, or when helping a pupil to a space they have chosen to access to self-regulate
- to comfort a distressed pupil
- to congratulate or praise a pupil, for example a pat on the back or a handshake
- to demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- to demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching

In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in a given situation, the member of staff should use their judgement and have regard to:

- the school's child protection policy
- the applicable circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present
- the individual pupil's age

Any other material factors, including but not limited to whether:

- the pupil has SEND or other vulnerabilities
- any alternative strategies that do not include physical contact can be used

Staff Authorisation

Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions are trained in positive handling and so wherever possible these would be the first to be called upon if a child requires positive handling. However, all members of staff can use reasonable force if following this policy.

Use of reasonable force to search pupils

The Headteacher and staff they authorise have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited

item as stated under the [Education Act 1996](#). A member of staff can use such force as is reasonable to search for legally prohibited items, but not to search for items banned under the school rules only. At Sutton Valence we use the guidance [Searching, screening and confiscation in schools - GOV.UK](#) if required to search a child.

Minimising Restrictive Interventions

Whole-school measures include:

- Careful consideration of how the school and classroom environment can support all pupils to achieve and thrive
- Establishing a calm school environment with whole school nurture approach.
- Always ensuring appropriate levels of supervision.
- sharing best practice for whole-class behaviour management, and for managing communal spaces such as corridors and playgrounds
- training staff in effective communication strategies, such as using appropriate tone of voice and empathy to aid de-escalation
- PSHE/assemblies/whole school EP support to support pupils to manage conflict and strong feelings.

- development of working staff-pupil relationships and trust
- recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning

Individual approaches can include:

- working closely with parents/outside agencies to support individual pupils
- strategies to support individual pupils based on their identified needs, including the development of behaviour support plans and risk assessments.
- giving pupils time, space and strategies to calm down before their behaviour escalates

Determining when use of restrictive interventions is appropriate

There will be times when school staff may need to use restrictive interventions, and they should know this option may be available to them. The decision on whether it is reasonable to use a restrictive intervention depends on the individual circumstances of each situation. To make this assessment, the member of staff should consider the following:

Is it necessary?

- Staff should consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation.
- Staff should assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks, or whether its use would 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.
- The risk associated with not using positive handling outweighs those of using it.
- There was identifiable risk to other child and/or members of staff and/or school property.

Is it 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

Consider 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.

Using reasonable force

- It is important to note that decisions often need to be made quickly and that the professional judgement of the member of staff involved is key.
- Where possible call a member of staff trained in positive handling
- Use de-escalation strategies
- A clear verbal warning should be given to the child before using reasonable force.
- Wherever possible reasonable force should not be used unless there is another responsible adult present to support, observe and call for assistance.
- It is important to use the minimum positive handling technique to achieve the desired result.

Seclusion

Seclusion - a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving - 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. In such circumstances, the pupil is not acting with intent.

Seclusion should not be implemented by staff through threat of punishment. The place to which the pupil is confined should be safe and not feel threatening or intimidating to the pupil. The pupil should be supervised at all times during the period of seclusion. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil should be allowed to leave.

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.

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.

At Sutton Valence we seek to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour so that they can provide proactive support, create an inclusive environment and consider the impact of school policies on pupils with SEND. We utilise staff who know individual pupils 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 work closely with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

If necessary we develop Behaviour Support Plans and risk assessments that are

reviewed with the parent and pupil if age appropriate, periodically and following any significant incident, so that changes can be made based on evidence of what has worked and what has not worked in practice for the individual pupil.

Recording and Reporting Duties

Recording the use of force (Appendix 1)

Incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event. It should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day. This requirement to record applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

Reporting the use of force (Appendix 1)

The use of force is reported to parents of the pupil involved as soon as practicable after the incident, and we endeavour to do this no later than the same day. Exceptions to the requirement to report are where it appears to the staff member that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. 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.

Follow up discussion on the use of force (Appendix 2)

Schools should communicate this information to parents in writing. Parents will be invited to a follow-up discussion about the incident where appropriate.

Recording the use of seclusion and non-force related restraint (Appendix 3)

Any incident of non-force restraint/seclusion may occur with or without direct physical contact must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event. It should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day. The requirement to record applies even if the use of seclusion or restraint in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

Reporting the use of seclusion and non-force related restraint (Appendix 3)

The use of seclusion and non-force related restraint is reported to parents of the pupil involved as soon as practicable after the incident, and we endeavour to do this no later than the same day. Exceptions to the requirement to report are where it appears to the staff member that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. The requirement to report applies even if the use of seclusion and non-force related restraint in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

Follow up discussion on the use of seclusion and non-force related restraint (Appendix 2)

Schools should communicate this information to parents in writing. Parents will be invited to a follow-up discussion about the incident where appropriate.

Complaints

All complaints made relating to the use of positive handling will be dealt with according to the school's complaints procedure. Allegations about a member of staff will follow Kent guidelines.

Equal Opportunities:

The governors and staff are committed to providing the full range of opportunities for all children, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, social, cultural or religious background.

Appendix 1: Use of positive handling record to be completed by member of staff who used active positive handling

Sutton Valence Primary Recording and Reporting of Force Form

Name of child positively handled:							
SEND/Medical/Vulnerabilities:							
Name of staff involved:							
Date of Incident:		Time:		Duration:			
Any Triggers							
Description of the incident:							
Pinching		Punching		Kicking		Biting	
Threatening		Screaming/shouting		Abusive language		Stripping	
Hair pulling		Head butting		hitting		Slapping	
Absconding		Where:					
Throwing		What:					
Persistent disruption		What:					

De-escalation strategies:							
Given time		Distraction		Given space		Talk calmly	
Reassure		Remind expectation		Give choices		Give a count	
Praise for partial compliance		Offer alternatives		State consequences		Repeat request	
Stimulus removed		After staff member intervene		Removal other children		Warn the child if they continue you will need to hold them and why	

Visual aids used		Block child's path/stand between		Shepherd the child in a direction		Comforting the child		
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Positive handling used:

Gently leading a child by the had/arm					Ushering a child away by placing a hand in the centre of the back.					Other
Holding Technique used:										
Elbow tuck/ Guided		Cupped fist/ Guided		Straight arm		Elbow tuck/ knee				
Elbow tuck/ seated					Elbow tuck/ Seated/legs					
Position:										
Walking		Standing		Seated		Floor				

Post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

Reflective Conversation with child (to be led by an adult who was not present in incident)

Who is present during the reflection:

Ask young person what they believe happened to them?

Ask young person what did the adult do to keep you and others safe?

Ask young person what could you have done differently?

Again check for injuries to child and person/s who carried out restraint?

Appendix 2

Follow up discussion on the use of force/ seclusion and non-force related restraint

Reason for meeting:
Present at meeting:
Any behavioural triggers or warning signs of an impending incident?
Were agreed behaviour support plans/risk assessments followed and if these not in place are they required?
Review de-escalation strategies used and how effective they were
Any different approaches to be considered for the future

Appendix 3

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

Name of staff involved:
Name of pupil involved:
SEND/Medical/Vulnerabilities:
Time:
Date:
Location:
Duration of intervention:
Description on intervention:
Reason for Intervention:
If applicable any injuries on pupil:
If applicable any injuries to staff:
Post incident support:

Reflective Conversation with child (to be led by an adult who was not present in incident)
Who is present during the reflection:
Ask young person what they believe happened to them?
Ask young person what did the adult do to keep you and others safe?
Ask young person what could you have done differently?

Again check for injuries to child and person/s who carried out restraint?

Appendix 7

Terminology

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 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.⁴ 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.

The various restrictive interventions above have been defined for completeness and should not be construed as an endorsement or otherwise for their use in schools. Some will not be relevant to most schools.