

WHITGIFT SCHOOL

Use of Reasonable Force and other Restrictive Interventions Policy

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Whitgift School is committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of students and staff. In line with current relevant legislation (including the Department of Education issued **Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in school – April 2026**), the School only permits restrictive intervention by reasonable and non-injurious means.

This policy should be considered alongside other, relevant school policies, including the **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy** and particularly the **Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusions Policy** with the importance of prevention and de-escalation as a means of minimising the need to use reasonable force and other restrictive interventions.

Terminology

The guidance from the Department for Education indicates the following:

- **Restrictive intervention:** a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. The 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.
- **Seclusion:** a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others as a safety measure when they might be experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation.
- **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.

School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the student.

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

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force. This power applies to any member of staff at the school. It can also apply to people whom the Headmaster has temporarily put in charge of students.

The importance of prevention requires a whole-school approach via annual training in the use of restrictive interventions, seclusion and reasonable force, as well as awareness of other, relevant policies. Other whole-school measures may include:

- consideration of how the school and classroom environment can support all pupils to achieve and thrive
- 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
- development of working staff-pupil relationships and trust
- recording and analysing data on the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning

There may also be appropriate, individual approaches that might include:

- working closely with parents to support individual pupils
- strategies to support individual pupils based on their identified needs, including the development of behaviour support plans. Where a pupil has a disability, schools have a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010 to support pupils with reasonable adjustments, making sure they can benefit from what the school offers in the same way as a pupil who is not disabled
- giving pupils time, space and strategies to calm down before their behaviour escalates

Application

It must be shown that on any occasion where restrictive intervention is used there were strong indicators that if immediate action had not been taken, injury or the committing of a criminal act would have followed. The decision on whether to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances. In addition to the general power to use reasonable force as described, the Headmaster and authorised members of staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for “prohibited items”, but only if those items are legally prohibited and not just banned under the School Rules only. (Please refer to the ‘Searching And Screening A Student’ Policy for more details.)

Examples of situations where restrictive interventions may be employed could include:

- A student is attacking a member of staff, or another student, or might harm themselves
- Students are fighting
- A student is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials, substances or objects
- A student is, or appears to be, under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances
- A student absconds from School (this will only apply if a student would be at serious risk if not kept in School)
- Removing a student from the classroom where their behaviour is causing, or is likely to cause, significant disruption to learning or presents a risk of harm, and where the student has not responded to repeated instructions from more than one member of staff to leave, and where appropriate de-escalation strategies have been attempted without success.
- Preventing a student behaving in a way that seriously disrupts a School event or a School trip or visit

Force must be proportionate and never be used as a punishment.

It is acknowledged that there is a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) with regard to the use of reasonable force with interventions appropriate to individual needs. Some appropriate strategies might include:

- removing stimuli that may be causing distress
- changing body language, facial expression, and/or tone of voice
- supporting the pupil to express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- engaging the pupil in an activity which can help them manage their feelings of anxiety
- distracting the pupil in something that interests them or by introducing familiar objects and activities to redirect their attention

Seclusion of a student away from others might be considered as a safety measure (in regard to themselves and/or others) when experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. The pupil in question would be secluded in a safe place and supervised at all times, then allowed to leave as soon as the risk of immediate harm has reduced.

Consideration should always be taken of the pupil’s welfare and dignity.

What might be regarded as constituting reasonable force?

Physical intervention can take a number of forms including:

- partial – restricting and preventing particular movements; and
- total – as in the case of immobilisation.

In particular, it could appear as:

- physically interposing between students;
- blocking a student's path;
- leading a student by the arm;
- shepherding a student away by placing a hand in the centre of the back, or in more extreme circumstances, using more restrictive holds

However, staff should never act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury or pain, for example by:

- Holding a student around the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict the student's ability to breathe
- Slapping, punching, kicking or using any implement on a student
- Throwing an object at a student
- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint
- Tripping up a student
- Holding or pulling a student by the hair or ear
- Holding a student face down on the ground
- Touching or holding a student in any way that might be considered indecent

Any form of restraint, whether seated or standing, comes with a risk of physical and psychological harm and so should be avoided wherever possible. In those instances where it has been necessary the relevant welfare checks, follow-up and reporting as outlined later in this policy must be followed and might apply to both pupil(s) and member(s) of staff.

Procedures

Staff should not hesitate to act in an emergency, provided they follow this policy. However, they should always satisfy themselves that the action they take would be considered justifiable by a wider audience, taking into account consideration of whether it is **necessary**, **proportionate** and the **student's welfare**.

Prevention, if possible, is preferable to any use of restrictive intervention/reasonable force. This includes implementing de-escalation strategies and promotion of positive behaviour before escalation to the point of requiring any use of force.

In any application of restrictive intervention, the minimum reasonable force should be used to defuse the situation. Help should be summoned from colleagues; other students should never be involved in the intervention. The student should be approached calmly but firmly.

Where possible, explain the consequences of refusing to stop the behaviour and continue to communicate with the student throughout the incident. It should be made clear that the physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary.

A calm and measured approach is needed and a member of staff should never give the impression that they have lost their temper, or that they are acting out of anger or frustration, or attempting to punish the student.

The method of intervention employed must use the minimum force for the minimum amount of time.

In dealing with these difficult and stressful situations, the following should be considered:

- Being aware of any feelings of anger
- Ways and means to summon help
- Talking as a means to calm the situation
- Providing a soft surface, if possible
- Being aware of accessories worn by the member of staff or by the student that could cause injury
- Ensuring a free passage of air through airways
- Monitoring the student's respiration, circulation and state of consciousness
- Involving professional medical assistance from the School nurses, GP or other medical practitioners in School

Especially, members of staff **should not**:

- Try to manage on their own
- Stop talking, even if the student does not reply
- Straddle the student
- Push the arms up the back
- Touch the student near the throat or head
- Do anything that might restrict breathing or circulation of blood
- Put pressure on joints or on arterial pressure points (e.g. inside of upper arm, groin or neck)

Recording of incidents where reasonable force, restrictive intervention or seclusion has been used – a 'significant incident'

Immediately following any use of reasonable, restrictive intervention or seclusion, the member of staff **must** directly inform the Senior Deputy, Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Assistant Head (Pastoral & Boarding) of the events. The relevant member of senior staff will then decide whether this classifies as a 'Significant Incident' for reporting purposes. There is a legal obligation then to properly record and report any significant incident involving the reasonable use of force; any use of seclusion must also be reported. The School Governors have a responsibility for ensuring an accountable system and, as such, the record of any use of reasonable force/restrictive intervention/seclusion will be reported to them and be reviewed and analysed to inform relevant learning and strategies.

Appendix A.: The proforma ‘Recording of use of reasonable use of force, seclusion or restrictive intervention’ should be completed as soon as possible afterwards.

- The name(s) of the student(s) involved and when and where the incident took place
- The name(s) of any other staff or student(s) who witnessed the incident
- The reason that force was necessary
- A brief outline of how the incident began and progressed, including details of the student’s or students’ behaviour, what was said by each of the parties, the steps taken to defuse the situation, the degree of force used, how that was applied, and for how long
- The student’s or students’ response and the outcome of the incident
- Details of any obvious or apparent injury suffered by the student(s), or any other person, and of any damage to property

Details should also be recorded on CPOMS in the usual way when opportunity allows.

At the first practicable, reasonable opportunity the student involved should be seen by one of School nurses, GP or other medical practitioners in School and a medical report obtained. The member of staff should also consult with a suitable medical practitioner if any harm has/might have been caused to them and a medical report obtained if so. Consideration should be given to the potential for any psychological harm caused as well as physical. Any injuries recorded should be reported in the normal manner.

Where reasonable force or seclusion has been used, the Headmaster and the parents or guardians **must** be informed by an appropriate member of senior staff as soon as is practicable (unless a Safeguarding issue means doing so would be likely to result in significant harm to the pupil; in which instance, the relevant local authority should be notified). It is expected that parents/guardians should be notified by phone on the same day as the incident. There must then, as soon as is reasonably possible, be confirmation in writing about the incident; this would likely also be combined with a parental meeting

Details reported to parents or guardians must cover:

- time, date, location and approximate length of time the force was used
- brief account of what type of reasonable force was applied, and the degree of force
- details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance

Please note that parental consent in advance is not needed to use force on a student in the appropriate circumstances.

All complaints about the use of force will be thoroughly, speedily and appropriately investigated.

There should be appropriate and timely follow-up conversations to facilitate reflection, learning and to support student and staff wellbeing. Any appropriate support for witnesses should also be considered.

Appendix A.

Recording of use of reasonable use of force, seclusion or restrictive intervention

Pupil name & form	
Time and date of intervention	
Location of intervention	
Reason for intervention; how the incident began	
Details of intervention/nature of any force used. What was said by any of the parties, steps taken to diffuse situation. Degree of any force used, how applied, for how long	
Names of any staff/student/other witnesses	
Any reasonable adjustments made	
Outcome of intervention – including any injuries sustained or damage to property	
Any other points of note	
Follow-up actions, including medical check for student	
Confirmation of parental notification and any points raised	

Copies of this completed form **must** be logged with both the **Senior Deputy** and **Senior Deputy's PA** (to go on file). A record must also be made on **CPOMS**.

Detail which further, relevant members of staff have been informed:

- Headmaster
- Deputy Head (Pastoral)
- Assistant Head (Pastoral)/Head of Boarding
- Boarding Housemaster
- Director of Section
- Head of Year/Year Team
- Form Tutor
- SENCO
- Any other staff members:

