DULWICH COLLEGE
FOUNDED 1619

RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS (INCLUDING USE OF REASONABLE FORCE) POLICY

Introduction

The College recognises that the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, can have a significant impact on the pupils, staff members of and parents involved, as well as the wider classroom.

A number of measures are adopted to minimise the need to use restrictive interventions, such as:

- promoting an environment which allows all pupils to achieve and to thrive;
- sharing best practice for behaviour management;
- 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;
- ensuring staff-pupil relationships are based on trust;
- recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions to inform planning;
- working closely with parents to support individual pupils;
- employing strategies to support individual pupils based on their identified needs (including through reasonable adjustments); and
- giving pupils time, space and strategies to calm down before their behaviour escalates.

However, the College also recognises that there will be times when the use of restrictive interventions will be lawful and necessary; for example, to keep individuals and the wider school community safe.

This policy aims:

- to help members of staff to minimise the need to use interventions through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies; and
- when necessary, to help members of staff to feel more confident in knowing how to use restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, safely, appropriately and lawfully.

Terminology

For clarity, this policy uses 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 policy 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 College 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 the section 'Other physical contact with pupils' below. This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

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

- **Restraint**: 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 the College. Some are only relevant to this setting in exceptionally rare circumstances.

Understanding restrictive interventions

Who can use reasonable force?

All members of College staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances, namely, to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- causing injury to themselves or others;

- committing a criminal offence;

- damaging property;

- causing disorder among pupils at the College, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

The College ensures that:

- Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions are adequately trained in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies. When deciding what formal staff training is required, the College ensures that the chosen training reflects the needs of the College

and the principles of this policy. The aim of any training would be to equip staff to judge when it is appropriate to use restrictive interventions, including in situations where quick decisions are needed and help them to understand how to assess whether their response is reasonable under pressure.

- If at any time it is determined that staff will regularly work alongside pupils where the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions may be required risk assessments are undertaken to ensure they can do so as safely as possible.

Use of reasonable force to search pupils

College staff authorised by the Master 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. 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 College rules only. Detailed guidance on searching pupils is contained in the College's Searching and Confiscation of Pupil Property Policy (Years 3 to 13).

Unacceptable uses of force

The College does not use corporal punishment; all staff understand that it is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment.

Pupils will never 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. The use of force can be dangerous, particularly where it occurs on the ground. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff will release their holds or re-position into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.

Where appropriate, the pupil will receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. For any form of restraint, including seated and standing, there is a risk of physical and psychological harm, and it should be avoided where possible.

Other physical contact with pupils

The College does not have a 'no contact' policy. Further, the College does not grant any requests by parents or members of staff not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions. The College recognises that the adoption of a 'no contact' policy could leave staff unable to intervene where reasonable in the circumstances to protect pupils fully.

The College acknowledges that there will be circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to have some physical contact with pupils which does not give rise to any question over the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions. This will depend on the circumstance, but 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 College 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 College's Safeguarding (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, and whether any alternative strategies that do not include physical contact can be used.

Seclusion

Seclusion is defined as for the purposes of this policy as a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving.[1] It should only be used by staff 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 never 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.

Determining when use of restrictive interventions is appropriate

There may be times when College staff may need to use restrictive interventions. 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:

1 Seclusion as defined in this policy is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. There are disciplinary measures that may be similar e.g. removal from the classroom (see relevant Behaviour Policies for disciplinary matters).

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.

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, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.

Has the member of staff considered the 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.
- As applicable, the member of staff may consider any behaviour support plan that may be in place.

This list of factors is not exhaustive, and staff should also take into account other relevant considerations.

If an assessment has been made to use restrictive interventions, staff will be supported in their decision making.

Consideration for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

The College recognises that 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. Triggers may include pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar situations or environments or feelings of fear and anxiety. In particular, pupils who 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.

The College seeks to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour so that it can provide proactive support, create an inclusive environment, and consider the impact of its policies on pupils with SEND. For example, the College considers how the culture and environment may be experienced differently by pupils with SEND and seek to support pupils to cope with situations that they may find distressing.

The College utilises 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 develops proactive strategies to reduce the likelihood of restrictive interventions being used. The College also work with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies as appropriate.

Depending on the circumstances, examples of strategies may 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.

Where appropriate, College staff work with pupils with SEND and their parents in the co-production of any necessary behaviour support plans. Behaviour support plans outline any adjustments, such as to address aspects of the College environment which the pupil finds challenging and ways for pupils to communicate their needs effectively.

Behaviour support plans detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil. This will be discussed in conjunction with the relevant parties, such as teachers, parents,

the pupil, pastoral staff or health professionals, and parameters around its use stated clearly in the plan. Where there is an identified risk, such as increased likelihood in the need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions, the College implements risk assessments and, where possible, mitigate risks such as through training and prevention strategies. Whether the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate will depend on the circumstances (see 'Determining when use of restrictive interventions is appropriate' above), irrespective of whether it has been considered as part of a behaviour support plan.

Any behaviour support plans will be reviewed with the pupil and their parent 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. Where a pupil has a disability, the College recognises that it has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to take reasonable steps to avoid disadvantage so that the pupil can fully participate in the education provided by the College, and that they can enjoy the other benefits, facilities and services that the College provides for pupils.

Pupil and staff support

The College evaluates all incidents involving the use of restrictive intervention as soon as practicable after the event to understand why it was used, the impact on pupils and staff, any patterns and trends, and how the use of restrictive interventions might be avoided in future, for example by amending or introducing a behaviour support plan.

If appropriate, the pupil and staff member involved will receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. Incidents in which a member of staff uses reasonable force or seclusion on a pupil are recorded as described in 'Recording and reporting duties' (below). In addition, any injuries are recorded in accordance with the College's medical and health and safety etc. procedures and reported, as appropriate, to the Health and Safety Executive.

The College will hold a follow-up conversation(s) to facilitate reflection, learning and to support pupil and staff wellbeing. This conversation should be framed as part of the overall debriefing process and look to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from both the staff and pupils involved, as well as to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue. Where possible, this process will be facilitated by a senior member of staff who was not involved in the incident.

The College will continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed, for example through further follow-up conversations, counselling or other resources. Additionally, any pupil who witnesses an incident of restrictive intervention where a peer may have been injured or become distressed will also be provided with appropriate support where necessary.

Recording and reporting duties

Records of incidents involving the use of restrictive interventions are maintained by the Deputy Master Pupils & Safeguarding (the College's Designated Safeguarding Lead).

Recording the use of force[2], seclusion and non-force-related restraint [3] [4]

Each of the following matters:

- a significant incident in which a member of staff uses force;
- a seclusion incident and/or an incident of restraint (including non-force related restraint) (NB: an incident of restraint may occur with or without direct physical contact e.g. removal of a walking aid)

must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable after the event by the member(s) of staff involved. They should endeavour to do this no later than the same day. The 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.

The following details should be sent by email to safeguarding@dulwich.org.uk:

- the name(s) of pupil and staff directly involved;
- any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code (if applicable);
- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention;
- a brief account of the incident, including what led up to the incident, identified or potential triggers if known, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used, and (where relevant) what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of any physical injuries sustained;
- a brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance;
- any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts;
- any additional details that are available such as: the pupil's and/or witnesses' accounts of what happened, when and how parents were notified, and what follow-up has taken place.

Reporting the use of force, seclusion and non-force-related restraint

Each incident relating to:

2 Procedure as set out is in place for recording each use of force incident in accordance with section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006

3 Procedure as set out is in place for recording each incident in which a member of staff secludes, restrains or immobilises a pupil in accordance with the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025

4 In circumstances where a restraint incident also constitutes a significant use of force, the report is made pursuant to section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006

- a significant incident in which a member of staff uses force;
- a seclusion incident and/or an incident of incident (including non-force related restraint)

will be reported in writing to the parents of the pupil involved by their Head of School as soon as practicable after the incident. They should 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. In this instance, the staff member must report the incident to any parent(s) who it can be reported to without resulting in significant harm or, if there are none, to the Deputy Master Pupils & Safeguarding (the College's Designated Safeguarding Lead) or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (via safeguarding@dulwich.org.uk) who will in turn contact the local authority within whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident.

The written report of the incident made to parents will include the following details as a minimum:

- the time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention;
- a brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance;
- a brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force;
- details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable.

The College recognises that 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.

The College will communicate this information to parents in writing, usually via email. Where appropriate, the parents will be invited to have a follow-up discussion about the incident. This may include:

- any behavioural triggers or warning signs of an impending incident;
- whether any agreed behaviour support plans were followed;
- what de-escalation strategies were used and how effective they were;
- what might be done differently in the future.

The College may use this information to amend any existing behaviour support plans, as needed.

Using data

The Governors' Safeguarding Committee reviews data on restrictive interventions to ensure that the College Leadership Team:

- identifies and implements improvements to policies and practices, particularly where approaches have been used for some time but have not been effective;
- identifies areas of learning and development for College staff, supporting specific departments and teachers to improve understanding and practice;
- understands pupils' repeat patterns and triggers to interrogate the effectiveness of pupil support measures, shares this information with teachers who work with those pupils to support them and, where appropriate, their parents, to establish a behaviour support plan or revise an existing plan;
- identifies any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to pupils who share protected characteristics, have SEN, or other types of vulnerability.

Complaints and allegations

Any complaints regarding the use of restrictive interventions will be dealt with in accordance with the Parent Complaints Procedure (including DUCKS).

Any allegation regarding inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions made against a member of staff will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures set out in the College's Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy.

Policy Owner:	Deputy Master Pupils & Safeguarding
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