St Dunstan's College

PART OF
ST DUNSTAN'S EDUCATION GROUP

USE OF RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS POLICY

Policy Owner:	Part A- Group CEO Part B – Deputy Head Pastoral
ISSR Reference:	ISSR Part 3: Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils
Date of review:	Autumn 2026
Approved by:	Part A: Group Board 25.09.26 Part B: Head and School Leadership Team, with assurance through the Local School Board
Date of next review	Autumn 2027

Version Control Information

Reason for Amendment	Role	Date	Main Changes
New Guidance from DFE published in April 2026	CEO	September 2026	Updated to reflect the new DFE Guidance 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools' April 2026 and new group policy framework

Part A – St Dunstan's Education Group Policy

1. Aims

The St Dunstan's Education Group is committed to maintaining safe, respectful and supportive environments in which pupils can learn and thrive.

The Group recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances in which restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, are required to prevent harm to a pupil or others. Such interventions are always regarded as measures of last resort and should only be used when necessary, proportionate and lawful.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- minimise the need for restrictive interventions through prevention and de-escalation;
- safeguard the welfare, dignity and rights of pupils;
- ensure staff understand the lawful use of restrictive interventions;
- establish consistent standards across the Group;
- ensure appropriate recording, reporting and oversight arrangements.

This policy applies to:

- all schools and nurseries within St Dunstan's Education Group;
- all employees;
- agency workers;
- volunteers;
- contractors working directly with pupils.

The policy applies to all activities organised by or on behalf of the Group, including off-site activities and educational visits.

2. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

This policy is informed by:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- Education Act 1996;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- DfE Use of Restrictive Interventions Guidance April 2026;
- DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation Guidance;
- Independent School Standards Regulations.
- The Group will ensure compliance with all applicable legal requirements relating to the use of restrictive interventions.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The St Dunstan's Education Group Board

The Group Board is responsible for:

- approving this policy;
- reviewing assurance information;
- scrutinising trends and incidents;
- holding leaders accountable for implementation.

3.2 Chief Executive Officer

The CEO is responsible for ensuring effective Group-wide compliance and oversight.

3.3 Heads

Heads are responsible for:

- local implementation;
- ensuring appropriate training;
- monitoring incidents;
- ensuring reporting requirements are met.

3.4 Designated Safeguarding Leads

DSLs are responsible for:

- oversight of recording and reporting arrangements;
- safeguarding advice following incidents;
- liaison with parents/carers and external agencies where required.

3.5 Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- following this policy;
- applying preventative and de-escalation strategies;
- using restrictive interventions lawfully;
- recording and reporting incidents.

4. Principles

The Group adopts the following principles:

4.1 Restrictive interventions are a last resort

Restrictive interventions should only be used where:

- there is a significant risk of harm;
- less restrictive alternatives have been considered or attempted;
- the intervention is necessary and proportionate.

4.2 Prevention first

Schools should prioritise:

- positive relationships;
- behaviour support;
- reasonable adjustments;
- de-escalation strategies;
- effective safeguarding practice.

4.3 Least restrictive approach

Where intervention is necessary, staff must use:

- the least restrictive option;
- the minimum force required;
- for the shortest time necessary.

4.4 Respect and dignity

All interventions must preserve, as far as reasonably practicable:

- dignity;
- privacy;
- wellbeing;
- emotional safety.

5. Appropriate physical contact with pupils

Our schools do 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 pupils which does not give rise to any question over the use of reasonable force or other restrictive interventions.

Examples include:

- Providing first aid to a pupil
- Guiding or escorting a pupil through the school building or on a school trip by holding their hand
- Comforting a pupil who is upset
- Offering congratulations or praise, such as with a pat on the back or 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 judgement, and have regard to:

- The school's child protection and safeguarding policy
- The specific circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present
- Factors including, but not limited to:
  - The pupil's age
  - Any known vulnerabilities, including whether the pupil has special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
  - Whether any alternative strategies that don't involve physical contact can be used

6. Definitions

Restrictive Intervention	Any intervention intended to prevent, restrict or subdue movement.
Reasonable Force	The use of no more force than is necessary in the circumstances to prevent harm, disorder, criminal activity or serious property damage.
Restraint	An intervention which immobilises or limits a pupil's movement.
Seclusion	Keeping a pupil apart from others and preventing them from leaving for safety reasons. Seclusion must never be used as punishment.
Significant Incident	Any incident involving force beyond routine and appropriate physical contact.

These definitions apply consistently across all the Group schools.

7. Acceptable Use of Restrictive Interventions

Reasonable force may be used to:

- prevent injury;
- prevent serious damage to property;
- prevent criminal offences;
- prevent serious disruption;
- protect safety.

8. Prohibited Practice

The following are prohibited:

- use of force as punishment;
- interventions restricting breathing;
- pressure on the neck, throat, chest or abdomen;

- intentionally forcing a pupil to the ground. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their hold or move into a safer position as quickly as possible
- seclusion used as a disciplinary sanction.

9. Using reasonable force to search pupils

The Headteacher (read also Head of School or Head of College) and any member of staff authorised by the Headteacher have a statutory power to search a pupil or their belongings if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item (as listed in the DfE's searching, screening and confiscation guidance) or an item banned under our school 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 our school 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 pupils and staff.

10. Deciding when the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate

10.1 Necessity and proportionality

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 outlined in section 8.1 of this policy 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 pupil and/or others.

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

- Is it necessary?
  - Are there other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage the situation?
  - Is a restrictive intervention likely to successfully reduce the risks, or could its use 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 pupil, such as their age, size and any medical conditions, SEND or other vulnerabilities

10.2 Pupil and staff welfare

Pupil welfare

The most important consideration when using a restrictive intervention is the safety and wellbeing of the pupil involved, as well as the safety of other pupils and staff. Staff should always consider the potential impact on the pupil's welfare balanced against any actions taken. For example, staff should bear in mind that pupils 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 pupil'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 pupil what is happening, why, and what the pupil needs to do, including using verbal and non-verbal strategies where needed, and giving time for the pupil to process information and respond where appropriate.

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.

Support following an incident

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

Our schools will make sure each pupil 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 school will continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed.

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

11. SEND and Additional Vulnerabilities

The Group recognises that some pupils may have:

- SEND;
- communication needs;
- sensory needs;
- trauma-related vulnerabilities;
- medical conditions.

Schools must consider these needs when planning support and responding to incidents.

12. Training

Schools shall ensure that:

- relevant staff receive appropriate training;
- competence is monitored;
- refresher training is provided as required;
- risk assessments inform training needs.

While all staff have this power, some staff, especially those who work closely with pupils who might show challenging behaviour, are more likely to need to use it than others, and their training levels will reflect this.

13. Recording and Reporting

All schools must maintain procedures for:

- recording significant incidents;
- recording restraint and seclusion;
- informing parents/carers where required;
- retaining records securely;
- monitoring trends and lessons learned.

14. Complaints and Allegations

Complaints relating to restrictive interventions shall be managed in accordance with the Group Complaints Policy.

Allegations relating to inappropriate use of force shall be managed in accordance with safeguarding procedures and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

15. Monitoring and Assurance

The Group will monitor:

- frequency of incidents;
- trends;
- disproportionate impact on particular groups;
- training compliance;
- lessons learned.

Schools may be required to provide assurance information to the Group.

16. Associated Documents

This policy should be read alongside:

- Behaviour Policy;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- SEND Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Complaints Policy;
- Search and confiscation policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct.

Part B – School Implementation

St Dunstan's College

1. Key Personnel

Head	Jade McLellan
DSL	Lucy Clewley
Deputy DSL(s)	Eden Wood (Senior School), Ailsa Cameron (Junior School), Andrew Coley (Junior School)
SENCO	Gemma Kenward (Senior School), Helena Smith (Junior School)

2. Local Definitions and Practice

Restraint

Examples might include situations where staff use the minimum force necessary to prevent immediate harm, such as:

- Holding a pupil's arms to stop them hitting another pupil.
- Preventing a pupil from running into a busy road during an off-site visit.
- Moving a pupil away from a serious fight where there is a risk of injury.
- Holding a pupil briefly to prevent them throwing furniture or objects that could injure others.
- Stopping a pupil from harming themselves, for example by banging their head against a wall.
- Guiding or escorting a pupil to a safer location when they are in immediate danger and refusing to move.

Current DfE guidance for England states that restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, should only be used when necessary to keep people safe and should be proportionate to the risk presented. They should not be used as a punishment.

Examples that would generally not justify restraint

- Refusing to do work.
- Swearing at staff.
- Leaving a classroom (unless this creates a significant safety risk).
- Being disruptive or defiant.
- Failing to follow instructions.

Seclusion

As defined above, seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention that keeps a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevents them from leaving, for the safety of

that pupil and/or others. This could be through physical obstruction or by making the pupil believe that they will be punished if they leave. For example, putting a pupil into a 'holding' room until they calm down is a form of seclusion.

We only use seclusion as a safety measure when a pupil is 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 on our response to misbehaviour.

During seclusion:

- The pupil will be secluded in a safe place that does not feel threatening or intimidating to them, such as the wellness centre, an office space or classroom (ideally in a discreet location).
- The pupil will be supervised at all times, by at least one member of staff. Preferably this would be a member of staff with positive handling training, but this cannot always be guaranteed, so all teaching staff have basic training on best practice.

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

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

3. Prevention and De-escalation

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 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 restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning

The individual approaches we use include:

- Working closely with parents/carers to support individual pupils
- Strategies to support individual pupils based on their identified needs, including:
- The development of learning support plan or specific the use of positive handling plans.
- Strategies to help pupils calm down before their behaviour escalates

- Making 'reasonable adjustments' where a pupil has a disability, to help them participate in school life as fully as possible

De-escalation when a situation arises
When a staff member is faced with a situation where a 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 a pupil's personal space
- Taking a pupil away from an 'audience' – speaking to them on their own rather than in front of a group of other pupils or staff
- Using empathy – asking the pupil to help you understand their feelings
- Distraction techniques
- Offering a calm space for the pupil to go to so they can self-regulate
- Verbal warnings – calmly reminding the pupil of the consequences of their behaviour

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

Our school is committed to understanding what might trigger challenging behaviour in pupils with SEND, and to providing the right support and an inclusive environment.

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

We will 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 will also work with the pupil, 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 pupil
- Staff members changing how they communicate with the pupil, such as being more mindful of body language, facial expressions and/or tone of voice
- Helping the pupil express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- Engaging the pupil in activities to help them regulate their emotions
- Distracting the pupil with familiar objects or activities to redirect their attention

Where appropriate, we will create individual learning support plans for pupils with SEND. The plan will be reviewed regularly, and following any significant incident, with the pupil and parents/carers to make sure it's still working well. The plan will:

- Outline any adjustments, such as to address aspects of the school environment which the pupil finds challenging
- Explain the best ways to communicate with the pupil

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

5. Recording Procedures

We have a legal duty to record and report all:

- Significant incidents involving force
- Seclusion incidents
- Restraint incidents

Recording incidents
Our school has a clear process in place for recording the incidents listed above, via CPOMS, including a description of any restraint that was used, where the pupil was held and for how long. A member of the safeguarding team will always debrief members of staff involved in the above to ensure everything has been logged on the list below.

Staff must record incidents in writing, as soon as possible after the event, and should endeavour to do this on the same day. Staff should do this even if the use of restrictive interventions is agreed as part of a pupil's learning support plan or positive handling plan.

For significant incidents involving force, we will record:

- The names of the pupil and staff members directly involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether they have an identified special educational need or disability, and their SEN status 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

CPOMS follow-up actions would then include parent contact and any relevant pupil or staff witness statements if required in that particular situation. The DSL (for Senior School students) or Deputy Head Pastoral (for Junior School pupils) would determine this. In their absence, this would be determined by a member of the DDSL team in either School.

For seclusion incidents and restraint incidents, we will record:

- The names of the pupil and staff members directly involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether they have an identified special educational need or disability, and their SEN status 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

Note: if a seclusion or restraint incident also constitutes a significant incident involving force, we will record it in line with our procedure for recording significant incidents involving force. It does not need to be recorded twice.

CPOMS follow-up actions would then include parent contact and any relevant pupil or staff witness statements if required in that particular situation. The DSL (for Senior School students) or Deputy Head Pastoral (for Junior School pupils) would determine this. In their absence, this would be determined by a member of the DDSL team in either School.

Completed reports will be kept securely and retained in line with our data protection procedures.

6. Reporting incidents to parents/carers

When reporting an incident to parents/carers, we will take the following steps:

- A member of the child's pastoral team or safeguarding team would call home or email if unable to reach the parents/carers, to inform them.
- If this is not in line with the positive handling plan in place (or they do not yet have one), a meeting would be called with the parents/carers, child's pastoral team and a member of the safeguarding team.

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 pupil's learning support plan or positive handling plan. There is one exception to this:

If a member of staff thinks that telling the pupil's parents/carers would likely result in significant harm to that pupil. In these cases, we will report the incident to any parent(s)/carer(s) who it can be reported to without resulting in significant harm or, if there are none, to the local authority where the pupil 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

Note: if a seclusion or restraint incident also constitutes a significant incident involving force, we will report it in line with our procedure for reporting significant incidents involving force. It does not need to be reported twice.

When reporting to parents/carers, we will have regard to data protection requirements when deciding what information to share. For example, we will not include any identifying details of any other pupil.

Following up with parents/carers after an incident

If a child already has a positive handling plan, a meeting would usually be called with parents/carers if incidents are increasing in frequency or severity or the plan did not work in this instance. If a child does not have such a plan in place, a parent meeting would be automatically called.

The meeting would include:

- Any behavioural triggers or warning signs of an impending incident
- Whether any agreed learning support plans or plans for restrictive intervention use specifically were followed
- What de-escalation strategies were used and how effective they were
- What might be done differently in the future

7. Reporting incidents to the local authority

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

In cases where a pupil has parents/carers and is the subject of 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).

Appendix 1 - Positive handling plan template

Name:	
Year:	
Form Group:	
Tutor:	
Named Adult:	
Date:	

What does the behaviour look like?		
Stage 1 Anxiety Behaviours	**Stage 2 Defensive Behaviours**	**Stage 3 Crisis Behaviours**

What are the common triggers?

De-escalation Skills			
De-escalation Skills	**Try**	**Avoid**	**Notes**
Verbal advice and support			
Giving space			
Reassurance			
Help scripts			
Negotiation			
Choices			
Humour			
Consequences			
Planned ignoring			
Time-out			
Supportive touch			
Transfer adult			
Positive re-direction			
Active listening			
Acknowledgement of how they are feeling			
Apologising			
Removing audience			
Other			

Diversions and Distractions	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Any medical conditions to be considered before using physical intervention?

Preferred method of physical intervention?			
Physical Intervention	**Try**	**Avoid**	**Notes**
Friendly escort			
Hold Hands			
Positive Handling			

Are there any other behaviours that require individual planning? Record the behaviour and the planned actions to address it.		
Behaviour	**Triggers**	**Planned actions**

How should we record the incidents and who should we inform?

Consent		
Relationship to Child:	**Name:**	**Signature (if appropriate, depending on the child's age)**:
Head of Year/Head of Section		
Deputy Head Pastoral		
Parent/Carer		
Child		
Review Date:		