



Restrictive Interventions, including use of reasonable force, in Schools Policy

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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Other Policies	3
3. Rationale	3
4. What is reasonable force?	4
5. Minimising the need to use reasonable force	5
6. Staff authorised to use reasonable force	5
7. When can reasonable force be used?	6
8. Deciding whether to use reasonable force	6
9. Using reasonable force.....	7
10. Power to search pupils without consent	8
11. Staff Training	9
12. Recording/reporting Incidents	9
Appendix A - Restrictive Interventions by Staff form.....	10
Appendix B - Types of Restrictive Interventions	13

Vision Statement

Believe Strive Succeed

Our vision is to provide an outstanding, inclusive and aspirational education for local children. We believe that everyone in our community is capable of achieving beyond their expectations by living each day in all its fullness, spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally and morally. We are underpinned by deep rooted values of respect, consideration, loyalty, responsibility and success.

1 Corinthians 12:12 'the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body'

1. Introduction

The Department for Education's guidance Use of Reasonable Force in Schools will cease to have effect from 1st April 2026. Instead, schools will be required to comply with new guidance "Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, schools must be aware that it does contain statutory guidance issued under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026) DfE Guidance document for headteachers, staff and governing bodies, and reflects statutory duties relating to the recording and reporting of significant incidents involving the use of force.

Relevant legislation to which this guidance relates to are:

- the Education and Inspections Act 2006, especially sections 93 and 93A
- the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2)
- (England) Regulations 2025
- the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations
- the Human Rights Act 1998
- the Equality Act 2010

2. Other Policies

Other policies to be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Student Behaviour
- Health & Safety
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Special Educational Needs

3. Rationale

3.1 The Education Act 2006 forbids corporal punishment, but allows all teachers to use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from:

- committing a criminal offence
- injuring themselves or others
- damaging property
- acting in a way that is counter to maintaining good order and discipline at the school

- 3.2 This power may be used where the student (including students from other schools) is on Bishop Stopford School premises or elsewhere in the lawful control or in the charge of a staff member.
- 3.3 There is no legal definition of when it is reasonable to use force. That will always depend on the precise circumstances of individual cases. To be judged lawful, the force used would need to be in proportion to the consequences it is intended to prevent. The degree of force used should always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result.
- 3.4 The Act does not cover more extreme situations, such as action in self-defence or in an emergency, when it might be reasonable for someone to use a degree of force.
- 3.5 Bishop Stopford's recognises the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, should only ever be used as a last resort, and is committed to minimising the need for restrictive interventions through prevention, early intervention and de-escalation strategies to reduce an immediate risk of harm. (reason for addition: to provide additional clarification on the use of de-escalation)
- 3.6 Bishop Stopford's acknowledges that restrictive interventions may have a significant physical and psychological impact on students and will therefore have regard to pupil dignity, welfare and individual needs. (reason for addition: consideration of student's welfare and for student's with SEND and mental health)

4. What is reasonable force?

- 4.1 The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils. Reasonable force forms part of a wider group of actions known as restrictive interventions.
- 4.2 Force is usually used to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body of a student. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.
- 4.3 Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is necessary and applying it for the shortest possible time.
- 4.4 As mentioned above, schools generally use force to control pupils and to restrain them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom.
- 4.5 Restraint means to hold back physically or otherwise limit a student's movement. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.
- 4.6 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 pupil.

5. Minimising the need to use reasonable force

- 5.1 Staff should always try to deal with the situation using other agreed strategies to de-escalate a situation before considering using force.
- 5.2 Although Bishop Stopford School recognises that preventative measures will not always work, there are numerous steps that will be taken in order to help reduce the likelihood of situations arising where the power to use force may need to be exercised. We endeavour to:
- Create a calm, orderly and supportive school environment that minimises the risk of violence of any kind
 - Develop effective relationships between students and staff that are central to good order
 - Adopt a whole-school approach to developing social and emotional skills
 - Take a structured approach to staff development that helps staff to develop the skills of positive behaviour management; managing conflict and also support each other during and after an incident
 - Recognise that challenging behaviours are often foreseeable
 - Effectively manage individual incidents while understanding the importance of communicating calmly with the student, using non-threatening verbal body language and ensuring that the student can see a way out of a situation. For example, students should always be given an option of going to a quiet space with the staff member away from bystanders and other students, so that the staff member can listen to concerns; or being joined by a particular member of staff well known to the pupil
 - Wherever practical, warning a student that force may have to be used before using force.
- 5.3 Restrictive interventions, include reasonable force, will only be used as a last resort, when all reasonable and proportionate de-escalation strategies have been attempted or are unlikely to be effective.
- 5.4 Where pupils have special educational needs and / or disabilities, staff should consider known triggers, communication needs, sensory sensitivities and any individual behaviour support plans.

6. Staff authorised to use reasonable force

The staff to which this power applies are defined in Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. These are:

- 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 headteacher has temporarily put in charge of pupils such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying students on a school organised visit.

SLT and the pastoral team who are likely to need to use reasonable force receive appropriate training and support, and relevant risk assessments are put in place.

All staff receive de-escalation CPD training through the Assistant Headteacher leading on behaviour and shares supporting resources.

7. When can reasonable force be used?

- 7.1 Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- 7.2 In a school, force is used for two main purposes – to control pupils or to restrain them.
- 7.3 The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.
- 7.4 The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can and cannot be used.
- 7.5 Schools can use reasonable force to:
- remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;
 - prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit;
 - prevent a pupil leaving the classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others;
 - prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground; and restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.
- 7.6 Schools cannot:
- use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.
- 7.7 In these examples use of force would be reasonable (and therefore lawful) if it was clear that the behaviour was sufficiently dangerous or disruptive to warrant physical intervention of the degree applied and could not be realistically dealt with by any other means.
- 7.8 Students must not be restrained in a way that affects breathing or circulation, including applying pressure to the neck, chest or abdomen. Ground restraint should be avoided wherever possible, if a student is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their holds or re-position into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible. (reason for addition: clarity on unacceptable use of force)

8. Deciding whether to use reasonable force

- 8.1 Staff should only use force when the risk of not using force significantly outweighs those of using force. Then the judgement whether to use force and what force to use should always depend on the circumstances of each case. Students with SEN and/or disabilities should be handled according to information about the individual student concerned (see section on 'Staff Training')

8.2 Decisions on whether the precise circumstances of an incident justify the use of significant force must be reasonable. Typically, such decisions have to be made quickly, with little time for reflection. Nevertheless, staff need to make the clearest possible judgements about:

- Whether the intervention is necessary, proportionate and in the best interest of the pupil's welfare.
- The greater the potential for injury, damage or serious disorder, the more likely it is that using force may be justified
- Reasonable force should only be used where less restrictive or non-physical strategies have been attempted or are unlikely to be effective.
- Staff should consider the potential physical and psychological impact of any intervention, particularly for pupils with SEND or previous trauma.

9. Using reasonable force

9.1 Staff, as far as possible, should not use force unless or until another responsible adult is present to support, observe and call for assistance. Then staff should always only use the minimum amount of force to achieve the desired effect.

9.2 Before using reasonable force staff should, wherever practical tell the pupil to stop misbehaving and communicate in a calm measured manner throughout the incident. Staff should not give the impression of acting out of anger or frustration, or to punish a pupil, and should make it clear that physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary.

9.3 Types of reasonable force used could include:

- Passive physical contact resulting from standing between students or staff and students
- Active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm or hand or ushering a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back
- In more extreme circumstances, using appropriate restrictive holds

9.4 Where there is a high and immediate risk of death or of serious injury, any member of staff would be justified in taking necessary action (consistent with the principle of seeking to use the minimum force required to achieve the desired result). Such situations could include preventing a student running off the pavement onto a busy road or preventing a student hitting someone with a dangerous object such as a glass bottle or hammer.

9.5 Staff should always make every effort to avoid acting in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury. However, in the most extreme circumstances it may not always be possible to avoid injuring a student.

9.6 Staff should always avoid touching or restraining a student in a way that could be interpreted as sexually inappropriate.

9.7 Where a student is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should reposition or release holds as soon as it is safe to do so. (reason for addition: no reference to ground repositioning)

- 9.8 Staff should always make every effort to avoid acting in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury. Medical assessment should be sought where appropriate following an incident (reason for addition: clarity on when and medical assessment should be done)
- 9.9 Seclusion is defined as a non-disciplinary restrictive intervention involving keeping students confined to a space away from others and preventing them from leaving, either through physical obstruction, blocking, or making the student believe they will be punished if they attempt to leave.
- 9.10 The school recognises that seclusion should only be used as a safety measure, and only in exceptional circumstances, to protect the pupil or others from immediate risk of harm when a student is experiencing high levels of emotional distress or behavioural dysregulation. Seclusion is not used as a punishment or as a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour.
- 9.11 Where seclusion is used, the student will be confined only to a space safe and appropriate. The student will be supervised at all times by a member of staff. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced the student will be allowed to leave the space.
- 9.12 In some circumstances, as an alternative to seclusion a student may shadow a Head of Year or a member of the Senior Leadership Team as a supportive safety measure. Shadowing involves the student remaining in the presence of a designated member of staff for a temporary period to reduce risk, provide assurance, and support de-escalation. Students who are shadowed are not confined to a space and this support is not used as a disciplinary or punitive measure.

(reason for additions: to provide advise on the use of seclusion)

10. Power to search pupils without consent

- 10.1 In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described above, head teachers and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for the following “prohibited items”:
- knives and weapons
 - alcohol
 - illegal drugs
 - stolen items
 - tobacco and cigarette papers
 - fireworks
 - pornographic images
 - any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property.
- 10.2 Force cannot be used to search for items banned under the school rules.

11. Staff Training

- 11.1 All Staff are provided with regularly CPD, including training in de-escalation and communication strategies
- 11.2 SLT and Pastoral staff receive training on the use of reasonable force annually
- 11.3 The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator will also make individual risk assessments available to staff where it is known that force is more likely to be necessary to restrain a particular student, such as a student whose SEN and/or disability is associated with extreme behaviour. Appropriate training will be given to the necessary staff working with these students on a regular basis, and Trust staff will be notified about procedures in place.
- 11.4 Some key members of staff within the School, including at least one member of Senior Leadership Team will be trained and regularly updated in the use of positive handling. Usually the staff are those most likely to find themselves in a situation that may require the use of reasonable force and are therefore trained to do this correctly and in a lawful manner.

12. Recording/reporting Incidents

- 12.1 Bishop Stopford's will keep a written record of every incident in which reasonable force or other restrictive interventions has been used, in accordance to the school's policy and procedures and safeguarding requirements via CPOMS. The purpose of recording is to ensure policy guidelines are followed, to inform parents, to inform governor's improvement processes, to prevent misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the incident and to provide a record for any future enquiry.
- 12.2 Staff that can be called if a situation arises include:
 - Heads of Year
 - SENCO
 - SLT Members
- 12.3 Staff to be informed if/when restraint takes place:
 - Deputy Headteacher (DSL)
 - Headteacher
- 12.4 'Use of Force, Restraint and Seclusion by Staff' forms should be completed by:
 - All members of staff involved and submitted onto CPOMS as soon as possible afterwards
- 12.5. Parents/Carers to be informed on the same day by the Pastoral Team or SENCO as appropriate.

Appendix A - Restrictive Interventions by Staff form

Appendix A Bishop Stopford Log

Use of Force / Restraint by Staff

Pupil Name	Tutor Group	SEND ☐ LAC ☐ EAL ☐
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Type of restrictive intervention used (see below for definitions):

Reasonable force ☐

Significant incident ☐

Seclusion ☐

Restraint ☐

Date and time ~~force~~ restrictive intervention was used

Place ~~force~~ restrictive intervention was used

Name of staff member(s) using restrictive intervention

Names of witnesses

Reason for restrictive Intervention	Please tick all appropriate
Prevent a pupil harming another person (including staff or fellow pupil)	
Prevent a pupil harming them self	
Prevent a pupil engaging in serious disorder and disruption to a lesson / school event / on a school trip	
Remove a child from a classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to leave (Not sure whether this can be a reason?)	
Conduct a search without consent for knives, weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco, cigarette papers, fireworks, pornographic images, any article which is likely to be used to commit an offence / cause injury / cause damage to property	

Description of the circumstances including what led up to the incident, identified potential triggers if known, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used and details of any physical injuries sustained. (Wording changed to match new guidance)

Add a brief account of why the restrictive intervention was assessed as necessary in this instance

Describe what actions have been taken to inform parents / carers of the pupil about the use of force, and when

Describe what follow up action is being undertaken (include details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impact)

Signed: **Date:**.....

THIS FORM SHOULD BE UPLOADED TO CPOMS AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE POSSIBLE

11

Appendix B - Types of Restrictive Interventions

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 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.