



**Southern
Education
Trust**

RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS, INCLUDING THE USE OF FORCE

As a trust, our ethos is encompassed in our vision statement

‘Making Lives Better’

and we commit to doing this through:



KINDNESS



COLLABORATION



CREATIVITY

Reviewed by: Trust Board

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Southern Education Trust Policy: Restrictive Interventions and Reasonable Force

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Intent

Schools in Southern Education trust recognise that it is important to establish a safe, secure and stable environment to enable pupils to grow, develop and learn. To achieve this, in certain circumstances, physical intervention, including safe touch and the use of reasonable force, can be necessary.

The trust understands that behaviour is often a means of communication which may signal that a pupil is in need of support but does not know how to express this; therefore, the trust expects schools to take a proactive approach to anticipating, managing and minimising potential triggers of distressed behaviour that may cause harm.

This policy acknowledges that situations may arise in which staff members will be required to use physical intervention, and in some cases reasonable force, in order to maintain a safe environment when other measures have failed to do so.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that physical intervention is used in a correct and safe manner, which is in accordance with the relevant legislation and national guidance.

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out the principles and procedures for the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, within Southern Education Trust schools. It is compliant with the Department for Education guidance effective from April 2026 and applies to all staff, pupils, and settings within the Trust. [[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk](#)]

2. Key Definitions

- **Restrictive Intervention:** Any action (physical or non-physical) that prevents, restricts, or subdues movement of a pupil's body or part of their body.
- **Reasonable Force:** Physical intervention that is necessary, proportionate, and lawful, used only for the minimum time required.
- **Significant Incident:** Any event where force goes beyond appropriate physical contact, including implementing non-physical restrictive interventions.
- **Seclusion:** Confining a pupil away from others and preventing them from leaving, either physically or through coercion.
- **Restraint:** Immobilising or limiting a pupil's movement, with or without direct physical contact.

3. Principles

- Restrictive interventions and reasonable force must only be used as a 'last resort', when planned alternatives and strategies have been exhausted, and there is an immediate risk of harm, criminal offence, property damage, or serious disorder. We recognise there will be times when the only realistic response to a situation will be a planned restraint or restrictive intervention
- The welfare and dignity of pupils and staff must be paramount when managing significant incidents. Interventions must never be used as punishment or routine discipline.
- All staff have a legal power to use reasonable force, but in doing so they must act within the law and trust policy. In addition where it can be reasonably predicted that this will be necessary, appropriate training should be provided in advance of a potential incident.

4. Prevention and Early Intervention

- Schools must prioritise positive behaviour cultures, early support, and de-escalation strategies to minimise the need for restrictive interventions. These should include the PACE approach.
- The trust expects staff to assess whether the incident requiring a response can be resolved without physical intervention and that they must attempt alternative strategies before intervening physically.
- Individual risk reduction plans should be co-produced with parents/carers in advance if a significant incident could be anticipated or following any significant incident.

5. Use of Reasonable Force / restrictive interventions

- May be used to:
 1. Prevent injury to self or others
 2. Prevent a criminal offence
 3. Prevent serious damage to property
 4. Prevent significant disruption to the school environment
- Only headteachers and staff authorised by the headteacher may use reasonable force to search for legally prohibited items, in line with DfE guidance [on searching, screening, and confiscation](#), this does not include items banned by school policy. [[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk](#)]

6. Seclusion

Schools recognise seclusion can be used as a non-disciplinary measure only in exceptional circumstances, to reduce risk and avoid the need for physical intervention when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation and is not acting with intent.

The school will ensure that seclusion is used only as a safety measure to protect the pupil or others from harm and will not use seclusion as a consequence or through the threat of punishment.

Where seclusion is used, the school will ensure that:

- The space used will be safe, suitable, and not intimidating or threatening to the pupil.
- The pupil will be appropriately supervised at all times.
- The restriction will last only for as long as the immediate risk of harm remains.
- The pupil will be allowed to leave as soon as it is safe to do so.

7. Prohibited Practices

- Force must never be used for punishment.
- Restraint must never affect a pupil's airway, breathing, or circulation.

8. Recording and Reporting

- Every incident involving restrictive intervention, reasonable force, or seclusion must be recorded promptly, including:
 - time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention,
 - the names of the staff involved and their roles in the intervention,
 - brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance including triggers, de-escalation strategies,
 - brief account of what type of force was applied the specific restrictive intervention, and the degree of force used,
 - details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable,
 - post-incident support provided.
- Parents/carers must be informed of incidents involving restraint, the use of force or seclusion as soon as is practically possible. This should be done by phone call initially and followed up in writing, ideally the same day, unless reporting would likely result in serious harm (in which case a referral to children's social care is required). A template letter to inform parents can be found in appendix 1.
- Governors must regularly review and challenge data on restrictive interventions, with reports included in headteacher updates to local governing boards.

9. Post-Incident Support

- Medical assessment for all involved, if required.
- Incident review to inform future strategies and reduce recurrence.
- Wellbeing support and restorative action for staff and pupils.

10. Special Considerations for Vulnerable Pupils

- The needs of pupils with SEND or other vulnerabilities must be considered, with tailored support and prevention planning.
- Data must be analysed for patterns of disproportionate use and used to improve practice.

11. Training and Accountability

- All staff must receive training in de-escalation, safe intervention, and legal duties appropriate to the risk profile of the young people they work with.
- Staff who are untrained in restrictive physical interventions, must defer to trained colleagues or senior staff.
- The Trust will ensure compliance with statutory guidance and monitor practice through governance structures.

12. Policy Review and Publication

- This policy will be reviewed annually and published on the Trust and school websites.
- It must be referenced in school behaviour policies and made available to all staff, parents, and carers.

Equality Impact

The Trust does all it can to ensure that its policies do not discriminate against pupils or others, either directly or indirectly, in line with any Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics.

Appendix 1. Letter to parents

Date

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to follow up on our telephone conversation earlier regarding an incident that occurred at school involving **[Child's Name]** on **[Date]**.

At **[Time]**, it was necessary for staff to use a restrictive physical intervention to ensure the safety of **[Child's Name]**, other students, and staff. This action was taken as a last resort, after other de-escalation strategies (such as verbal reminders, space, or redirection) were not successful.

This incident occurred because:

(Please include a brief description of the trigger/behaviour, the technique used—e.g., guiding, holding—why it was necessary, any injuries, and a brief description of how the situation was resolved. *Delete these notes once completed.*)

We understand that receiving this information may be upsetting. Please be assured that we remain fully committed to supporting **[Child's Name]**. We will be reviewing **[Child's Name]**'s personal support plan to identify strategies to prevent similar situations in the future, and we welcome your input to this process.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact your child's key adult or the headteacher.

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of this incident or its handling, you have the right to raise a concern or make a formal complaint.

You can do this by contacting the headteacher directly or by following the school's complaints procedure, which is available on our website or on request from the school office. We are committed to addressing any concerns promptly and fairly.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

[Role]