

ST MATTHEW'S BLOXAM CHURCH OF ENGLAND (VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL



Restrictive Interventions, including Use of Reasonable Force, Policy

October 2026

Policy owner	Headteacher
Approved by	Governing Body / relevant committee
Review cycle	Annually, or sooner if national or local guidance changes
Next review	October 2027

Purpose. This policy sets out how the school will prevent and minimise restrictive interventions, when they may lawfully be used, and how incidents will be recorded, reported, reviewed and learned from. It reflects the Department for Education guidance Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026), which replaced the previous Use of reasonable force guidance.

1. Legal and guidance framework

The policy has regard to the Education and Inspections Act 2006, including sections 93 and 93A; the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025; the Equality Act 2010; the Human Rights Act 1998; and relevant health and safety duties. The statutory recording and reporting requirements in the 2026 DfE guidance apply from April 2026.

- All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances.
- Force must never be used as punishment.
- The school will use prevention, early support and de-escalation wherever possible, with restrictive intervention used only when necessary and proportionate.

2. Definitions

Term	Meaning in this policy
Restrictive intervention	An umbrella term for physical and non-physical actions that prevent, restrict or subdue movement of a pupil's body or part of their body.
Reasonable force	Physical restrictive intervention. No more force than is necessary should be used, for the least amount of time required in the circumstances.
Significant incident	An incident where use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff. This includes physical force used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.
Restraint	A non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits movement, with or without direct physical contact.
Seclusion	A non-disciplinary intervention in which a pupil is confined away from others and prevented from leaving by physical obstruction, blocking, or by being made to believe they will be punished if they leave.

3. Our approach: prevention and de-escalation first

Restrictive interventions can have a significant physical and psychological impact. The school therefore seeks to reduce their use by creating an inclusive, predictable environment and by understanding individual pupils' needs, communication and triggers.

- Positive relationships, clear routines and effective whole-class behaviour management.
- Calm communication, appropriate tone of voice, time and space to process and regulate.
- Identifying and reducing environmental, sensory or communication triggers.
- Working with pupils and parents to agree proactive strategies and reasonable adjustments.
- Using behaviour support / positive handling plans and risk assessments where an increased likelihood of restrictive intervention is identified.
- Reviewing incident data to identify patterns, repeated triggers, disproportionate use and opportunities for improvement.

4. When reasonable force may be used

A member of staff may use reasonable force, in the circumstances permitted by law, to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- Causing injury to themselves or another person.
- Committing a criminal offence.
- Damaging property.
- Causing disorder among pupils at the school, during a teaching session or otherwise.

The decision is based on the individual circumstances. Staff should consider whether intervention is necessary, whether it is proportionate, and the pupil's welfare. They should use the least restrictive option and the least amount of force for the shortest time required. Relevant medical needs, SEND, communication needs, vulnerabilities, age, size and equality considerations must be taken into account.

5. Unacceptable uses and safety safeguards

- Force must not be used for punishment.
- A pupil must not be restrained in a way that affects the airway, breathing or circulation, including covering the mouth or nose or applying pressure to the neck or abdomen.
- Ground restraint carries particular risk. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release the hold or reposition the pupil into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.
- Staff should stop, reduce or change an intervention if it is escalating risk or causing greater harm.
- Medical assessment and treatment should be obtained promptly where appropriate.

6. Appropriate physical contact

The school does not operate a "no contact" policy. Appropriate physical contact may include first aid; guiding or escorting a pupil; comforting a distressed pupil; congratulating or praising a pupil; demonstrating the use of an instrument; or demonstrating PE or sports techniques. Staff use professional judgement and have regard to safeguarding, the pupil's age, needs, SEND or vulnerabilities, the circumstances and whether alternatives are available.

7. Seclusion

Seclusion is not a disciplinary response. It should only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. It must not be imposed through threat of punishment. The space must be safe and not threatening or intimidating, and the pupil must be supervised throughout. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil must be allowed to leave. Every use of seclusion must be recorded and reported in accordance with section 11.

8. Pupils with SEND and other vulnerabilities

The school recognises that pupils with SEND may be disproportionately subject to restrictive intervention. Staff will seek to identify underlying causes and triggers, including pain, sensory overload, communication difficulty, unfamiliar environments or previous adverse experiences. Where appropriate, plans will be co-produced with the pupil, parents and relevant professionals and will set out prevention strategies, communication approaches, reasonable adjustments and any circumstances in which increased physical contact may be appropriate.

Where there is an identified increased likelihood of reasonable force or another restrictive intervention being required, an appropriate risk assessment must be in place. Behaviour support / positive handling plans will be reviewed periodically and following any significant incident.

9. Staff training and support

Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions should be adequately trained in safe and lawful practice and in preventative and de-escalation strategies. School leaders will determine training needs from the school context, individual risk assessments and incident patterns. The school will take reasonable steps to protect staff health, safety and welfare. Staff are not expected to place themselves at unreasonable risk.

The school has previously provided Positive Handling training. Training arrangements will be kept under review to ensure that current training reflects the principles of the April 2026 DfE guidance.

10. Searching pupils

The Headteacher and staff authorised by the Headteacher may search a pupil or their possessions where the statutory conditions are met. Reasonable force may be used to search for items legally defined as prohibited, but not solely for items banned under school rules. Staff must follow current DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance.

11. Recording and reporting incidents

This section reflects statutory duties effective from April 2026. The governing body must ensure that procedures are in place and followed.

11.1 Significant use of force

Each significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable. The staff member(s) involved should endeavour to complete the record no later than the same day. At St Matthew's Bloxam, the record will be made on CPOMS using the relevant restrictive intervention / physical restraint category and must include at least:

- Names of the pupil and staff directly involved.
- Relevant pupil needs or circumstances, including identified SEND and SEN status code.
- Date, time, location and approximate duration.
- What led up to the incident, known or possible triggers, and preventative / de-escalation strategies used.
- The type and degree of reasonable force used, where relevant.
- Why the use of force was assessed as necessary.
- Any physical injuries and post-incident support or medical treatment.

The school should also record the pupil's and witnesses' accounts where appropriate, when and how parents were informed, and subsequent follow-up.

11.2 Reporting significant use of force to parents

Parents must be informed as soon as practicable after each significant use-of-force incident, and the school should endeavour to do so no later than the same day. The information should be provided in writing, for example by email or the school's messaging system, and should include the date, time, location, approximate duration, why the intervention was assessed as necessary, the type and degree of force used, and any physical injuries. Parents should normally be offered a follow-up discussion.

The duty applies even where restrictive intervention is anticipated within an agreed behaviour support plan. The statutory exceptions are where the pupil is aged 20 or over, or where reporting to a parent is likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. In the latter case, the incident must be reported to any parent to whom it can safely be reported or, if there is none, to the relevant local authority.

11.3 Seclusion and non-force restraint

Every incident of seclusion or restraint, including restraint without direct physical contact, must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable, with staff endeavouring to do so on the same day. The written record must contain the pupil and staff names, date, time, location, approximate duration, relevant needs including SEND/SEN status, why the intervention was necessary, injuries and post-incident support. Parents must be informed as soon as practicable and the school should endeavour to do so on the same day. For a maintained school, the governing body must ensure there is a procedure for supplying parents with a copy of the written record.

Where a restraint incident also constitutes a significant use of force, the school does not need to report the same information twice and will follow the significant-use-of-force reporting procedure.

12. Post-incident response and learning

- Check promptly whether the pupil, staff member or anyone else requires medical assessment or treatment, and record/report injuries under the school's health and safety procedures where required.
- Inform a member of the senior leadership team as soon as possible.
- Offer separate opportunities for the pupil and staff involved to reflect on what happened, impact, triggers and what might prevent recurrence. Where practicable, this should be facilitated by someone not directly involved.
- Provide appropriate support to witnesses, including pupils who may have been distressed.
- Repair and rebuild relationships through appropriate follow-up dialogue.
- Review and, where necessary, amend risk assessments and behaviour support / positive handling plans.
- Monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide further support where needed.

13. Monitoring, governance and equality

The Headteacher will ensure restrictive-intervention data is reviewed regularly and reported to governors in an appropriately anonymised and proportionate form. The governing body will take reasonable steps to ensure the school's recording and reporting procedures are complied with and will scrutinise patterns, repeated incidents and triggers, staff development needs, effectiveness of support plans, and any disproportionate use affecting pupils with protected characteristics, SEND or other vulnerabilities. Small-number data will be interpreted cautiously.

14. Complaints and allegations

Complaints about restrictive interventions will be managed through the school's Complaints Procedure. Where an allegation is made that a member of staff has used force or another restrictive intervention inappropriately, the school will follow Keeping Children Safe in Education and its safeguarding procedures, including referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where the relevant criteria are met.

15. Related policies and guidance

- Positive Relationships and Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection / Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy and SEN Information Report
- Health and Safety Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People
- DfE Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026)
- DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance
- DfE Behaviour in Schools guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current version)

16. Review

This policy replaces the November 2023 Physical Intervention/Restraint Policy. It will be reviewed annually, or earlier where legislation, statutory guidance, local authority guidance or school practice changes.