Use of Restrictive Intervention, including the Use of Reasonable Force

ODBST Level 1 Statutory Policy:	**ALL** Schools require this policy with **no changes** allowed to core text. No changes are necessary to personalise this with school name and branding, as this is a Trust level policy for use, without change, by all schools, **except** where a school contact is required as identified in the content of the policy. LGBs will **note** adoption in LGB meetings. Review will take place at Trust level, and schools will be notified of updates and review dates as necessary.
Other related ODBST policies and procedures:	ODBST behaviour policy ODBST safeguarding and child protection policy ODBST SEND policy
Committee responsible:	SEC
Approved by:	ODBST Board
Date Approved:	25.03.26
Review Date:	24.03.28

1. Introduction

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 enables school staff to use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from:

- committing a criminal offence (or for a pupil under the age of criminal responsibility, what would be an offence for an older pupil);
- causing personal injury or damage to property;
- prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any pupils receiving education at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Relevant documentation:

- Use of restrictive intervention including the use of force April 2026
- School (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and associated regulations
- Equality Act 2010
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 and thereafter

2. Objectives

Trustees recognise that the use of restrictive intervention, including reasonable force and seclusion, can have a significant impact on the pupils, members of staff and parents involved as well as the wider classroom and school community. However, there are times when the use of restrictive interventions will be lawful and necessary; for example, to keep individuals and the wider school community safe.

3. Terminology

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 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.

The various restrictive interventions above have been defined for completeness and should not be construed as an endorsement or otherwise for their use in ODBST schools.

4. Minimising the need to use force

In order to minimise the occasions on which the use of force would be required, all ODBST schools will:

- create an environment in all areas of the school that is calm and minimises the risk of incidents arising that might require the use of force;
- teach pupils how to manage conflict and strong feelings;
- use strategies and procedures within the ODBST behaviour policy to de-escalate incidents if they do arise;
- have a clear and effective communication strategies to aid de-escalation;
- ensure that positive pupil staff relationships are a high priority based on trust and respect and aligned to the core ODBST values;
- only use force when risks involved in doing so are outweighed by the risks involved in not using force;
- have a personalised approach to individual pupils, have clear behaviour plans and where the pupil has a disability, ensure that reasonable adjustments are in place under the Equality Act 2010 to make sure that these pupils can benefit from the core school offer;
- ensure that pupils have time, space and strategies to self-regulate before behaviour escalates.

5. Staff authorised to use force

5.1 All members of ODBST school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances. This includes teaching staff on permanent and fixed term contracts and learning support assistants. Other school based staff employed by the ODBST such as administration staff are also authorised.

5.2 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 school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

5.3 All school based ODBST staff will have appropriate behaviour management training as part of the wider ODBST behaviour strategy and identified staff, who are most likely to need to use force, will have received appropriate training from either Step Up or Team Teach.

5.4 The ODBST does not expect that staff employed via a supply agency would be expected to use force as part of the support for identified pupils and would only use force on any pupil in a school if there was absolutely no other adult available to keep a child or member of staff safe.
Schools should ensure that occasional supply staff are not put in a position where they are working with pupils who regularly need the use of force and the school based decision will be communicated to these staff on arrival at the school.
Where agency staff are used for a period of time they should be trained in the use of force in the same way that all school staff are trained.

5.5 Schools should ensure that there is a current and relevant risk assessment in place for all staff who regularly work alongside pupils where the use of such interventions may be required, so that it is as safe as possible for the pupils and member(s) of staff concerned.

6. Deciding whether to use force

6.1 Force should be used as a protective measure and never as a disciplinary penalty. It is illegal to use force for the purpose of punishment. The judgement on whether to use force and what force to use should always depend on the circumstances of each case such as the size and age of the pupil, other known vulnerabilities, medical conditions and in the case of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities, information about the individual concerned.

6.2 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.

6.3 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.

6.4 Staff will make judgements about:

- the chance of achieving the desired result by other means that are more effective and less restrictive;
- the likelihood of restrictive intervention reducing the risks or if the restrictive intervention will escalate the situation further or cause more harm that the behaviour itself;
- knowing when to stop a restrictive intervention and attempt a different stategy;
- the seriousness of the incident assessed by the effect of the injury, damage or disorder which is likely to result if force is not used.

6.5 Pupils should not 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 or abdominal regions. The use of force can be dangerous, particularly where it occurs on the ground, and staff should release their hold on the ground or re-position into a safer alternative as quickly as possible. Where appropriate, the pupil should 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.

6.6 ODBST schools will not grant any requests by parents or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions. Parental consent is not required to restrain a pupil, but where the use of force is identified on risk assessments or is identified by an external professional as a named means of intervention, this should always be discussed and agreed with parents.

7. Seclusion

- Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving
- 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. In such circumstances, the pupil is not acting with intent.
- Seclusion should not 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.
- An incident involving the use of seclusion must be recorded and reported in the same way as any other use of restrictive force.

Seclusion, as defined in this guidance, is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. There are disciplinary measures that are similar, such as removal from the classroom, and are used in accordance with the ODBST behaviour policy.

8. Other physical contact with pupils

8.1 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 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 school 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.

8.2 In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in a given situation, the member of staff should use their judgement and have regard to:

- the ODBST Safeguarding and 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 if any alternative strategies that do not include physical contact, can be used instead.

9. Pupils with SEND

9.1 It is recognised and understood 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.

Pupils who are non-verbal or 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.

Schools should consider how the school 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.

Schools should 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. They should also work with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

9.2 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.

9.3 Behaviour support plans

- Where appropriate, school staff should work with pupils with SEND and their parents in the co-production of any necessary behaviour support plans.
- Behaviour support plans should outline any adjustments, such as to address aspects of the school environment which the pupil finds challenging and ways for pupils to communicate their needs effectively.
- Behaviour support plans should detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil. This should be discussed in conjunction with the relevant people, 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, schools must have risk assessments in place 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, irrespective of whether it has been considered as part of a behaviour support plan.

Any behaviour support plans should 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 school 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 school, and that they can enjoy the other benefits, facilities

10. Pupil and Staff support

- School leaders must evaluate each incident involving restrictive intervention as soon as practicable after the event to understand why it was used, the impact on both staff and pupil and how the use if restrictive intervention can be avoided in the future.
- The review should be led by a member of staff not directly involved in the restrictive intervention to ensure objectivity.

- The individual behaviour plan and risk assessment should be reviewed and where appropriate, amended. In the event that a pupil does not have a behaviour plan and/or risk assessment, one should be written.
- Patterns and trends should also be analysed on a regular basis.
- Anyone involved should receive any medical assistance and treatment for injury sustained during the intervention. All incidences must be recorded as stated in section 12 of this policy. Any medical injury should be recorded on Smartlog in accordance with Health and Safety expectations.
- Each school should monitor the impact on well-being of the intervention overtime for those involved and including those who may have witnessed the restrictive intervention. Appropriate support should be given where necessary.

11. Staff Training

The school's staff induction process will set out staff member's responsibilities in relation to the ODBST policy on the use of restrictive intervention .
Where applicable, staff will receive accredited training in the chosen approach approved by the ODBST.

Staff who have not received accredited training are not precluded from using reasonable force where needed but should not be the first port of call to do so. Staff employed through supply agencies would not normally be trained in the use of force and therefore would not normally be expected to be the person who uses force.

Risk assessments and procedures will be reviewed at least once a term.

12. Recording Incidents

12.1 The incident must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event and unless there is exceptional reason not to, within 24 hours of the event occurring.
Records must be made even when the intervention is part of an agreed plan.

12.2 The Headteacher, or in their absence the person who is acting as Headteacher, in consultation with the members of staff involved in the incident, will oversee the recording of the incident. This will include:

- the name and age of the pupil and names of staff directly involved;
- any relevant needs of the pupil including those of a SEND nature and the SEND status code;
- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention;
- brief account of the incident including triggers, de-escalation/prevention strategies employed first, what type of force was applied, the degree of force and details of any physical injuries sustained;
- the rational for applying force in that instance;
- any post incident support.

12.3 An incident where unreasonable use of force is used on a pupil would always be a significant incident and should be recorded as above and then reported directly to the Headteacher and the ODBST Executive Safeguarding Lead.

12.4 All incidents where restrictive intervention has been used will be recorded on CPOMS. The record must be made as soon as practical after the incident. All information will be treated in

confidence. The record will form part of the child's safeguarding record and is open to inspection by parents.

13. Reporting incidents

All incidents where physical force has been used will be reported to parents. The report must be made available to parents as soon as practical after the incident. Parents should sign to acknowledge receipt. The signed report should then be uploaded to CPOMS.

If it is likely that reporting the incident to a parent will result in significant harm to the pupil, then the incident should be reported to the local authority safeguarding team. The information will be treated in confidence.

A termly report of the use of force should be shared with the ODBST Executive Safeguarding Lead and with the Local Governing Body of each school. Trustees will receive termly reports on the use of force in schools and will monitor the data accordingly.

14. Reporting to Local Governing Bodies

14.1 The Local Governing Body must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the school's procedures for recording and reporting the use of force and seclusion and restraint are complied with.

14.2 Local Governing Bodies should regularly review and interrogate data on restrictive interventions to ensure school leaders:

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

Local Governing Bodies and should consider the limitations of data and what can be inferred from it. Analysis should be proportionate and avoid over-interpreting small sub-groups of people.

15. Complaints and allegations

Complaints will be dealt with under the ODBST complaints procedures. Parents and pupils have a right to complain about actions taken by ODBST staff. If a specific allegation is made against a member of staff then the school will follow guidance set out in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education". This includes the provision regarding suspension of staff.