Restrictive Interventions, including use of reasonable force in schools Policy. 2026-2027
St. Michael in the Hamlet Primary School

This policy provides guidance to all adults working within the school whether paid, voluntary, directly employed by the school or by a third party.

This policy has been produced with Department of Education: restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools – guidance for schools in England (April 2026)

Introduction

St. Michael-In-The-Hamlet Community Primary School, we believe that positive behaviour grows from creating a safe, happy, caring and inclusive environment where every child can thrive. Central to this is the strong, positive relationships developed between pupils and staff, helping children feel secure, valued and understood.

Our behaviour curriculum explicitly teaches expected behaviours and is closely linked to the Zones of Regulation Curriculum, helping children understand and manage their emotions. Pupils are taught that we all belong to a school community where space is shared and everyone's rights must be respected. They learn that staff can be trusted to support them when needed and that a wide range of emotions, which also affect the body physically, are a normal part of life. We emphasise that strategies can be developed to manage emotional responses and behaviour, while recognising that personal experiences and differences may influence how individuals react. Above all, we prioritise wellbeing as a foundation for both physical and mental health, and we ensure pupils understand that their actions carry consequences.

This policy references the correct legal framework – Education and Inspections Act 2006 (s.93), Education Act 2011, and the December 2025 DfE guidance.

The designated senior lead who is responsible for oversight for restrictive interventions is the head teacher. All records will be reviewed by the safeguarding governor on a half-termly basis.



Managing Behaviours relationally: S.M.I.T.H Approach

We at St Michael in the Halmet Community Primary School strive to demonstrate a relational approach to supporting social and emotional development and behaviour:

- Recognise that children's basic needs must be met for emotional growth
- Children with a specific vulnerability (SEN/LAC/CPC/Family/PP) may not behave as their chronological age
- Recognise that interacting positively and respectfully is a complex skill and needs to be explicitly taught in each year group
- All children are vulnerable and do not hold any power
- If children have no other option, they will quickly move into fright/flight/freeze or flop mode
- All staff need to consistently demonstrate that they care and can be trusted
- Children are best supported through strong staff & parent connections.
- Adult communication to children is key to raising self-esteem
- All staff need to be well regulated as raised voices create fear and tension.
- Strategies and skills to manage behaviour take time and effort to learn – small successes need to be celebrated.
- Acknowledging and taking responsibility for actions can only be done when we are calm state.
- Children may not be able to read social cues or deal with strong emotions without adult support.

Supporting Behaviour

Staff will

- take time to recognise and record positive behaviours and attitudes and reward success
- try and identify children and young people doing the right thing and enhance this
- engage in establishing the non-negotiable and negotiable rules at the start of the academic year and re-visit these regularly



- focus on the values, rights and responsibilities of the school when establishing these boundaries in conversation with children and young people
- remind children and young people that their actions impact on others and that they have a responsibility to safeguard others' rights
- seek both resolution and learning when dealing with incidents
- consider how our actions and words help and give children and young people time and space to resolve the situation
- keep in mind that children and young people benefit from a clear structure (containment) within which to learn
- use sanctions only as a form of appropriate, proportionate and positive intervention
- keep in mind that any sanction used is to resolve rather than escalate a situation whilst preserving the dignity of all involved.

De-escalating behaviours

We have a focus on supporting children to make positive behaviour choices and empowering them to understand the impact of their choices, both positive and negative. As with all the above PACE and VRFs staff also use de-escalation strategies in supporting children to manage their behaviours. Although there are lots of examples of how to de-escalate behaviours e.g. distraction, humour, giving space, taking a child to a safe space and listening. Our de-escalating strategies in school are individual to the child and based on their need, development and understanding.

Terminology relating to restrictive intervention

Restrictive intervention: a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This guidance 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 schools. Some will not be relevant to most schools.

In some cases, there is a need for positive handing due to the nature of the behaviours being presented. This being where a child is posing a danger to themselves, others and/or property. All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances. To prevent or stop a pupil from:

1. causing injury to themselves or others
2. committing a criminal offence
3. damaging property
4. causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Restrictive Interventions should be applied as an act of care and control with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the pupil to regain self-control. It should never take a form which could be seen as a punishment. 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 region or abdomen.



There are some forms of physical intervention, which may involve minimal physical contact, such as blocking a pupil's path or the staff member physically interposing him or herself between the pupil and another pupil or object. However, in some circumstances, direct physical contact may be necessary. In all circumstances other methods should be used if appropriate or effective restrictive invernetions should be a last resort.

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

• the school's child protection (or any other relevant) policy
• the applicable circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present
• the individual pupil's age 7
• any other material factors, including but not limited to whether:
• the pupil has SEND or other vulnerabilities o any alternative strategies that do not include physical contact can be used

When restrictive intervention becomes necessary:

Do

- tell the pupil what you are doing and why
- Use the minimum force necessary
- Involve another member of staff if possible
- Tell the pupil what s/he must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition)
- Use simple and clear language
- Hold limbs above a major joint if possible e.g. above the elbow relax your restraint in response to the pupil's compliance

Don't

- act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil
- attempt to reason with the pupil



- involve other pupils in the restraint
- touch or hold the pupil in sexual areas
- twist or force limbs back against a joint, bend fingers or pull hair
- hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around the neck

All incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event. It should be recorded by the staff members involved and they should endevour to do this no later than the same day.

Seclusion - a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving - 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 accordance with the procedures

After a positive handling intervention has been used:

There is a need for debriefing after the incident both for the staff involved and the pupil. A member of the leadership team should be informed of any incident as soon as possible. Arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised should be made with those involved. An appropriate member of the teaching staff should always be involved in debriefing the pupil involved and any victims of the incident should be offered support, and their parents informed.



As soon as possible following the incident, a restricted intervention/seculusion reporting document must be completed ***Appendix A*** and sent directly to the head teacher or most senior member of staff in school at the time. Following this, the head teacher will complete the parental reporting document and ensure that this is sent via e-mail on the same day to the parents/carers of the child involved.

CPOMS will be used as a central log register where all incidents will be recorded and can be analysed for patterns. Any patterns and trends will be reported and discussed as governors. This will tagged under *Verbal & Physical Aggressive Incidents – Restrictive Intervention*

Staff members are encouraged to take reflection time and speak to a senior lead within their year group to discuss what happened. Any concerns can be passed on to the head teacher following this process.

Partnership with home

We work as a team to support the pupils in our setting as they grow and develop socially and emotionally. We actively promote a partnership with parents/carers and other agencies, (where appropriate). Parents/carers would always be informed of any incidents of restrictive handling where deemed appropriate either a behavioural support plan or a risk assessment would be implemented. External support from BIT (Behaviour Intervention Team) could also be sought.

Physical Contact

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 selfregulate
• 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

In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in a given situation, the member of staff should use their judgement and have regard to:
• the school's child protection (or any other relevant) 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 o any alternative strategies that do not include physical contact can be used

Unacceptable uses of force

It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment. 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 region or abdomen. The use of force can be dangerous, particularly where it occurs on the ground. If a pupil 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.

Complaints and allegations

Any complaints regarding the use of restrictive interventions should be dealt with in accordance with the school's normal complaints procedure.



If an allegation regarding inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions is made against a member of staff, the procedures in Keeping Children Safe in Education should be followed. This includes the provisions regarding suspension of staff.

This policy will be reviewed annually

Reviewed: October 2026

Renewal date: October 2027



Appendix A

Schools should record the following details as a minimum using CPOMS:

• names of pupil and staff directly involved
• any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code
• time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
• brief account of the incident, including what led up to the incident, identified or potential triggers if known, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used, and (where relevant) what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of any physical injuries sustained
• brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance
• any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

