

RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS POLICY

(Including the Use of Reasonable Force, Restraint and Seclusion)

**THIS POLICY APPLIES TO THE WHOLE SCHOOL INCLUDING EYFS,
PREP AND PRE-PREP**

P078v01

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1. Introduction

Gayhurst School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all pupils. The school recognises that behaviour is a form of communication and adopts a “relationships first” approach, prioritising understanding, support and restoration. This policy sets out the school’s approach to the use of restrictive interventions and should be read alongside the Behaviour Policy, Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy, and SEND/Inclusion policies.

Restrictive interventions are used only as a last resort where there is an immediate risk of harm. Any intervention must be necessary, proportionate to the level of risk presented, and used for the shortest possible time. The school’s approach is to minimise the need for such interventions through effective behaviour management, strong relationships and early support.

2. Safeguarding Context

The use of restrictive interventions is a safeguarding matter. All staff must act in the best interests of the child and recognise that inappropriate or excessive use may result in both physical and psychological harm. Behaviour that leads to the use of restrictive intervention may also indicate an underlying safeguarding concern, and staff must remain vigilant to this.

All incidents will be considered within the context of safeguarding procedures and shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

3. Definitions

A restrictive intervention is defined as any action that prevents or restricts a pupil’s movement or liberty to reduce an immediate risk of harm.

Reasonable force refers to the minimum level of physical force necessary, used for the shortest possible time to achieve this aim.

Restraint is a form of restrictive intervention involving the use of physical force to hold or restrict movement.

Seclusion is defined as preventing a pupil from leaving a space they would otherwise be free to leave, including blocking exits or standing in a doorway. Seclusion must never be used as a punishment.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for following this policy and must prioritise de-escalation and preventative strategies. Staff must only use restrictive interventions where the legal threshold is met and must ensure that all incidents are recorded and reported promptly.

The Senior Leadership Team will ensure consistent implementation and monitor use. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will maintain oversight where safeguarding concerns arise. The Governing Body will review data and ensure appropriate oversight.

The Head has overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented effectively and that staff are appropriately trained and supported.

5. Prevention and Whole School Approach

The school seeks to minimise restrictive interventions through positive relationships, clear routines and a restorative approach. Staff are expected to adopt a curious and empathetic approach and use de-escalation strategies wherever possible.

6. Appropriate Physical Contact

The school does not operate a “no contact” policy. Appropriate physical contact may be used for reassurance, guidance or safety where proportionate and appropriate.

All physical contact must be consistent with safeguarding principles and should be open, appropriate and proportionate to the circumstances.

7. Use of Restrictive Interventions

Restrictive interventions may only be used where it is necessary to prevent a pupil from causing injury to themselves or others, seriously damaging property where this presents a risk to safety, or causing serious disorder that presents a risk of harm.

Staff must be satisfied that there is an immediate and real risk of harm and that this risk cannot be managed through de-escalation or other less restrictive means.

Any intervention must be the least restrictive option available, proportionate to the level of risk presented, and applied for the shortest possible time.

Restrictive interventions must never be used as a punishment, to enforce compliance with instructions, or as a substitute for appropriate behaviour management strategies.

8. Decision-Making Principles

Before intervening, and throughout any intervention, staff must make a dynamic risk assessment. This includes consideration of whether there is an immediate risk of harm, whether the intervention is proportionate to that risk, and whether the pupil's individual needs have been taken into account.

Staff must consider the pupil's age, size, communication needs, SEND, medical conditions and any known triggers or trauma history.

Staff must use verbal de-escalation and non-physical strategies wherever possible and must only use the minimum force necessary. The intervention must cease immediately once the risk of harm has reduced.

9. Behaviour Systems and Sanctions

In line with the Behaviour Policy, the School may apply a range of proportionate sanctions where behaviour does not meet expectations, including the loss of break time or removal from activities. These sanctions are intended to support reflection, restore relationships and reinforce expectations, rather than to punish.

Where pupils are required to remain in a space as part of a sanction, they must not be physically prevented from leaving. If a pupil chooses to leave, this should be managed through follow-up consequences in line with the Behaviour Policy, rather than through physical enforcement.

Staff must be aware that physically preventing a pupil from leaving a room or space may constitute seclusion, and is only lawful where there is an immediate and identifiable risk of harm. It must never be used to enforce compliance, including requiring a pupil to complete work or follow instructions.

Staff may direct, encourage and insist on expectations being followed, but must not physically enforce compliance unless it is necessary to prevent harm.

10. Seclusion

Seclusion is defined as preventing a pupil from leaving a space they would otherwise be free to leave and is considered a serious restrictive intervention. It may only be used in exceptional circumstances where there is an **immediate risk of serious harm** to the pupil or others, and where other strategies have been unsuccessful or are not appropriate.

Where seclusion is used, it must be:

- continuously supervised by a member of staff

- used for the shortest possible time
- regularly reviewed throughout the incident
- ended immediately once the risk of harm has reduced

The environment used must be safe, appropriate and non-threatening, and the pupil must be able to communicate distress.

Seclusion must never be used:

- as a punishment or sanction
- for low-level disruption or non-compliance
- as part of routine behaviour management

All incidents of seclusion must be recorded and reported in line with the school's statutory recording procedures.

11. Flight Risk

Where a pupil presents a risk of leaving a safe environment (for example, attempting to leave the classroom, school site or enter an unsafe area), staff may intervene to prevent them from doing so only where leaving would create an immediate risk of harm to the pupil or others.

Such interventions may include positioning, guiding or, where necessary, the use of reasonable force. Any intervention must be proportionate to the level of risk and used for the shortest possible time.

Staff must continuously assess the level of risk and must cease the intervention as soon as it is safe to do so. Once the immediate risk has passed, the situation must not be allowed to become a form of enforced confinement or sanction.

Repeated incidents of flight risk should trigger a review of the pupil's needs and the development of appropriate risk assessments and support strategies.

12. Prohibited Practices

The school prohibits any use of force that is not in accordance with this policy or that places a pupil at risk of harm. The use of force as a punishment is unlawful and is strictly forbidden.

The following practices are prohibited:

- any technique that restricts a pupil's breathing or circulation

- applying pressure to the neck, chest or abdomen
- covering a pupil's mouth or nose
- any use of force intended to cause pain or discomfort
- prolonged or unnecessary restriction of movement

Staff must not use any technique which could foreseeably cause injury, distress or humiliation. Any intervention that places a pupil at increased risk must be avoided.

Where any injury occurs, or where there is concern about the appropriateness of an intervention, this must be reported immediately and managed in line with safeguarding procedures.

13. Recording and Reporting

The school has a statutory duty to record all incidents of restraint, seclusion and any significant use of force.

Staff must report any such incident to a member of the Designated Safeguarding Team immediately following the event and must complete a written record on iSams as soon as practicable, and where possible on the same day.

The record must include a factual account of the incident, including the context, the behaviour observed, de-escalation strategies used, the reason why the intervention was necessary, the type and duration of the intervention, and details of any injuries or medical attention required.

All records will be reviewed by the DSL to determine whether any safeguarding concerns arise.

Parents will be informed of the incident as soon as practicable, normally on the same day, unless doing so would place the pupil at risk of harm, in which case safeguarding procedures will be followed.

All incidents will be recorded in line with the school's behaviour and safeguarding recording systems and retained in accordance with the school's data retention policy.

14. Monitoring and Oversight

The Designated Safeguarding Team, alongside the Senior Leadership Team, will review the use of restrictive interventions on a regular basis, and at least termly, in order to identify patterns, trends and any disproportionate use affecting particular groups of pupils.

This analysis will be used to inform staff training, behaviour support strategies and environmental adjustments.

The Governing Body will receive regular reports on the use of restrictive interventions and will provide appropriate oversight and challenge to ensure that practice remains lawful, proportionate and consistent with the school's safeguarding responsibilities.

15. Support Following Incidents

Following any incident, the immediate priority will be the safety and wellbeing of all pupils and staff involved. Where necessary, appropriate medical assessment or treatment will be provided.

Once the situation has stabilised, a structured debrief will take place with the pupil and staff involved, led where possible by a member of staff not directly involved in the incident. This will support reflection, repair relationships and identify any learning.

The school will review the incident to understand the factors that contributed to the behaviour and identify strategies to reduce the likelihood of future incidents.

16. SEND and Individual Support

The school recognises that pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), as well as those who have experienced trauma or adverse childhood experiences, may be more vulnerable both to behaviours that lead to restrictive interventions and to the impact of such interventions.

The school is committed to reducing the need for restrictive interventions through proactive, individualised support. This includes identifying triggers, understanding communication needs and implementing strategies to support regulation and engagement.

Where appropriate, the school will develop individual behaviour support plans or risk assessments. These will be created in partnership with the pupil, parents and, where appropriate, external professionals. Plans will set out:

- known triggers and early warning signs
- preferred de-escalation strategies
- agreed approaches to support regulation
- any necessary adjustments to the environment or curriculum

The School will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, and will monitor the use of restrictive interventions to ensure that no group of pupils is disproportionately affected.

Following any significant incident, plans will be reviewed to ensure that learning is captured and future risk is reduced.

17. Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and updated as required to reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding requirements, or school practice. It may also be reviewed following any significant incident or where monitoring indicates a need for change.