

Restrictive Interventions Policy 2026–27



Arnbrook Primary School

Including the use of reasonable force, restraint and seclusion

Updated in line with DfE statutory guidance effective from 1 April 2026

Policy owner	Headteacher / Senior DSL
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Approved by	Arnbrook Primary School
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Review date	September 2027 (or sooner if legislation/guidance changes)

1. Purpose and objectives

Arnbrook Primary School is committed to providing a safe, caring and inclusive environment in which pupils and staff can feel safe, learn effectively and thrive. The school recognises that restrictive interventions can have a significant physical and emotional impact and should therefore only be used where necessary, proportionate and lawful.

This policy replaces the previous Physical Intervention Policy (Use of Reasonable Force) and reflects the Department for Education guidance 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools', effective from 1 April 2026. The guidance replaces the 2013 'Use of reasonable force in schools' guidance.

This policy should be read alongside the Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, SEND Policy, Complaints Procedure, Allegations Against Staff Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Safe Touch Policy, Intimate Care Policy, First Aid arrangements and relevant individual behaviour support plans and risk assessments.

2. Status and legal framework

The DfE guidance contains statutory guidance in relation to the recording and reporting of each significant incident involving the use of force. The governing body must have regard to this statutory guidance. The remainder of the DfE guidance is non-statutory but should be followed unless there is good reason not to.

The principal legislation relevant to this policy includes the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025, the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

3. Definitions

Restrictive intervention: a means to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This is the umbrella term covering physical and non-physical interventions.

Reasonable force: a term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. 'Reasonable' means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, according to the circumstances.

Restraint: a non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. It may or may not involve direct physical contact.

Seclusion: a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and preventing them from leaving, whether by physical obstruction, blocking or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave.

Significant incident: any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff. This includes where physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

4. Principles

- The school will proactively minimise the need for restrictive interventions through prevention, early support, positive relationships and de-escalation.
- Restrictive intervention will never be used as a form of punishment.
- Staff will use the least restrictive intervention, the minimum amount of force necessary and for the shortest time necessary to reduce the relevant risk.
- Staff will consider whether a less restrictive and more effective strategy could be used.
- The decision to use reasonable force is based on the circumstances at the time and remains a matter of professional judgement within the law.
- The pupil's dignity, welfare, age, size, developmental maturity, SEND, medical needs, vulnerabilities and relevant Equality Act considerations will be taken into account.

- Where possible, staff will communicate calmly with the pupil, explain what is happening and allow time to process information.
- The school will not operate a 'no contact' policy. Appropriate physical contact may be necessary to safeguard pupils and support their welfare.

5. Minimising the need for restrictive interventions

The school will use whole-school and individual approaches to reduce the likelihood of incidents escalating.

- Positive, consistent behaviour management and high expectations.
- Strong staff-pupil relationships and trust.
- Appropriate classroom, corridor, playground and lunchtime environments.
- Effective communication, including appropriate tone of voice, empathy and clear instructions.
- Time, space and agreed strategies to support pupils to regulate before behaviour escalates.
- Early identification of triggers and patterns through behaviour and safeguarding information.
- Working with parents/carers and relevant professionals to develop effective preventative approaches.
- Recording and analysing restrictive intervention data to identify patterns, improve practice and inform school improvement.
- Reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND and other vulnerabilities.

6. When reasonable force may be used

All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances. Reasonable force may be used to prevent or stop a pupil from:

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

Before using restrictive intervention, staff should consider whether it is necessary, proportionate and in the pupil's welfare interests.

- Necessity: are there less restrictive alternatives that are likely to reduce the risk effectively?
- Proportionality: is the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention being used for the least amount of time?
- Welfare: what impact will the intervention have on the pupil, including their dignity, distress, vulnerabilities and any SEND or medical needs?

If an intervention is escalating the situation or causing more harm than the behaviour itself, staff should reconsider their approach and seek an alternative where possible.

7. Who may use reasonable force?

All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in the circumstances set out above. This includes teachers and other staff who have control or charge of pupils, and staff who may need to intervene in an emergency.

The school will ensure that staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions are adequately trained in safe and lawful practice and preventative/de-escalation strategies. The Headteacher will determine training requirements according to the school's context and identified risks.

8. Appropriate physical contact

The school recognises that appropriate physical contact does not necessarily constitute reasonable force or a restrictive intervention. Examples include:

- giving first aid;
- guiding or escorting a pupil, including supporting a pupil to a space they have chosen to access for self-regulation;
- comforting a distressed pupil;
- appropriate praise, such as a handshake or pat on the back;
- demonstrating how to use a musical instrument; and
- demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE or sports coaching.

Staff must use professional judgement and consider the pupil's age, the circumstances, the presence of other adults, the pupil's SEND or vulnerabilities and whether an alternative strategy without physical contact is available.

9. Unacceptable uses of force

- Force must never be used for the purpose of punishment.
- Staff must not restrain a pupil in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation.
- Staff must not cover a pupil's mouth or nose or apply pressure to the neck or abdomen.
- The use of force on the ground should be avoided wherever possible. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release or reposition the pupil into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.
- Any restraint carries a risk of physical and psychological harm and should be avoided where possible.

Where appropriate, any pupil or staff member who has been injured will receive medical assessment and treatment as soon as possible.

10. Seclusion

Seclusion is distinct from ordinary disciplinary removal from a classroom. It is a non-disciplinary safety intervention involving keeping a pupil away from others and preventing them from leaving.

- Seclusion may 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 implemented through a threat of punishment.
- The space must be safe and must not feel threatening or intimidating.
- The pupil must be supervised at all times.
- The pupil must be allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced.
- Every seclusion incident must be recorded and reported to parents in accordance with this policy.

Ordinary disciplinary removal from a classroom is not seclusion as defined by the DfE guidance and is managed through the Behaviour Policy.

11. SEND, inclusion and individual behaviour support

Arnbrook Primary School recognises that pupils with SEND may be disproportionately subject to restrictive interventions. Behaviour that presents risk may be linked to sensory overload, pain, unfamiliar situations, communication difficulties, anxiety, fear or other unmet needs.

- Staff will seek to understand the underlying triggers of behaviour and provide proactive support.
- Where appropriate, pupils with SEND and their parents/carers will be involved in co-producing behaviour support plans.
- Behaviour support plans will identify reasonable adjustments, communication strategies, triggers, early warning signs, preventative approaches and de-escalation strategies.

- Where increased physical contact may be appropriate, the circumstances and parameters will be clearly described in the behaviour support plan, developed with relevant staff, parents/carers, the pupil and professionals as appropriate.
- Where there is an identified risk of reasonable force or other restrictive intervention, the school must have an appropriate risk assessment and will seek to mitigate risk through prevention, environmental adjustments and staff training.
- Plans will be reviewed periodically and following any significant incident, taking account of what has and has not worked.

The existence of a behaviour support plan or parental agreement does not make the use of restrictive intervention automatically reasonable. The decision must always depend on the circumstances at the time.

12. Staff training and risk assessment

Staff who are likely to need to use restrictive interventions will receive appropriate training in safe and lawful use, prevention and de-escalation. Training will reflect the principles of the April 2026 DfE guidance.

Where staff regularly work with pupils where restrictive intervention may be required, the school will undertake appropriate risk assessments to support staff and pupil safety.

Where the school uses a specific accredited physical intervention programme, staff will follow the techniques and limitations of that programme and maintain training in accordance with the provider's requirements.

Training records will be maintained and reviewed by the Headteacher/designated senior leader.

13. Recording significant use of force

The school will record every significant incident involving the use of force. This is a statutory requirement. The incident must be recorded as soon as practicable and staff should endeavour to complete the record no later than the same day.

The record will include, as a minimum:

- names of the pupil and staff directly involved;
- relevant needs or circumstances, including whether the pupil has identified SEND/disability and their SEN status code;
- date, time, location and approximate duration;
- what led up to the incident, known or potential triggers and preventative/de-escalation strategies used;
- the type and degree of force applied, where relevant;
- details of any injuries;
- why the intervention was considered necessary; and
- post-incident support, including medical treatment or other adverse impacts.

The school may record additional information such as pupil/witness accounts, when parents were notified and follow-up actions.

14. Reporting significant use of force to parents/carers

The school will report each significant use of force to the pupil's parent/carer as soon as practicable and should endeavour to do so no later than the same day. The report will normally be provided in writing, for example by email or the school's online communication system.

The report will include, as a minimum:

- date, time, location and approximate duration;
- why the intervention was considered necessary;
- the type and degree of force used; and

- details of any physical injuries, where applicable.

The requirement to report applies even where the use of restrictive intervention has been anticipated or agreed as part of an individual behaviour support plan.

The only exceptions are where the pupil is aged 20 or over, or where it appears to the staff member that informing the parent would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. In the latter circumstance, the school will follow the DfE reporting requirements and safeguarding advice.

15. Recording and reporting seclusion and restraint

The school will record each incident of seclusion or restraint in accordance with the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025 and the DfE April 2026 guidance.

This includes restraint that occurs without direct physical contact, for example removing a pupil's walking aid. Such incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable and staff should endeavour to do so no later than the same day.

Records will include the pupil and staff involved, date/time/location/duration, relevant needs or SEND, why the intervention was necessary, injuries and post-incident support. Parents/carers will be informed as soon as practicable and should be informed no later than the same day wherever possible.

Where a restraint incident also constitutes a significant use of force, the school will follow the significant use of force recording/reporting procedure rather than duplicating the same information.

16. Post-incident support and debrief

Following an incident, the school will support the pupil and staff involved, meet immediate physical and emotional needs and seek to maintain positive relationships.

- Any injuries will be assessed and treated appropriately.
- The incident will be evaluated as soon as practicable to understand why intervention was used, its impact, patterns and how future incidents might be avoided.
- The pupil and staff member should have an opportunity for a follow-up conversation as part of the debriefing process.
- Where appropriate, the conversation should be facilitated by a staff member who was not directly involved.
- The school will consider support for pupils who witnessed an incident, particularly where a peer was injured or distressed.
- Behaviour support plans and risk assessments will be amended where the evidence indicates that changes are needed.
- Staff and pupil wellbeing will be monitored and additional support provided where necessary.

17. Monitoring, governance and use of data

The Headteacher and governing body will monitor the use of restrictive interventions. Governors will regularly review data to ensure procedures are being followed and to identify improvements.

- frequency and type of restrictive interventions;
- repeat patterns and possible triggers;
- whether preventative and de-escalation strategies are effective;
- training and development needs for staff;
- whether behaviour support plans require amendment; and
- whether there is disproportionate use affecting pupils with SEND, protected characteristics or other vulnerabilities.

Data will be considered proportionately and alongside the limitations of small numbers. The purpose of analysis is improvement, safeguarding and inclusion rather than simply counting incidents.

18. Complaints and allegations

Complaints about restrictive interventions will be managed in accordance with 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 the safeguarding and allegations against staff procedures in Keeping Children Safe in Education and relevant local safeguarding arrangements.

19. Communication and publication

This policy will be made available to staff, pupils and parents/carers. Relevant individual behaviour support plans and risk assessments will be shared with staff who need the information to keep pupils safe.

The school will communicate clearly that appropriate physical contact is permitted where lawful and necessary, and that the school does not operate a 'no contact' policy.

20. Related policies and guidance

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Allegations Against Staff Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Safe Touch Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- First Aid and Medical Conditions procedures
- Educational Visits Policy
- Department for Education: Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

21. Monitoring and review

This policy will be monitored regularly and reviewed by the governing body at least annually, or sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, training arrangements, significant incidents or school practice indicate that an earlier review is required.

Policy adopted by: Arnbrook Primary School

Date: August 2026

Review date: September 2027