OAK GREEN SCHOOL
Believe, Achieve, Succeed

Non-Statutory Policy

RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS, INCLUDING THE USE OF REASONABLE FORCE, IN SCHOOLS POLICY

Rights Respecting School:

Oak Green School is currently a Silver Level UNICEF 'Rights Respecting School'; through our ethos and policies we fully support the 'UN Convention on the Rights of the Child' (UNCRC) and the 42 Articles for the rights of children worldwide. With regard to curriculum and teaching, attendance and behaviour and personal development and wellbeing; these might reference Articles 3, 12, 18, 28, 31 & 37. The intention of these Articles is to promote positive actions.

1. **Introduction:**

Staff and governors have a duty to promote good behaviour and discipline and ensure an orderly environment within which all children and adults feel respected and safe. In order to maintain the safety and welfare of our children, it may sometimes be necessary to use 'restrictive interventions' and 'reasonable force' on a child, as permitted by law.

This is only to be used when all possible options for giving the child time/space to regain self-control have been exhausted. The school expects staff to take reasonable, proportionate and necessary steps to protect children in their care from being harmed and supports the taking of any necessary action to prevent injury or serious damage to property. (The Children Act 1989).

The use of a 'physical restrictive intervention' (including 'reasonable force' and seclusion) to control an assault, prevent destruction of property or to minimise injury is not intended to reduce a behavioural difficulty and should not be confused with a behaviour management plan or used as a punishment. Nominated members of staff (Sunflower Team) are trained to use reasonable force to control or restrain children using 'Norfolk Steps' 'Step-Up' training.

We have a trained Positive Behaviour Support Team (Sunflower team). This team should be called in the first instance where use of force may be required, however all members of school staff have a legal power to use 'restrictive intervention's and 'reasonable force'.
(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6943dad6501cdd438f4cf5aa/Restrictive_interventions_including_use_of_reasonable_force_in_schools.pdf)

The following information is taken from 'Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools' DfE April 2026 (latest):

2. ***What is a restrictive intervention?***

The term 'restrictive intervention' covers the broad range of actions that prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body or part of the body of a pupil. This term is used as an umbrella term to cover actions that could be physical and non-physical (such as seclusion).

The school's behaviour policy has a strong emphasis on reducing the need for 'restrictive interventions' through preventative and de-escalating strategies at both whole school and individual pupil level.

When deciding to use a 'restrictive intervention' staff should decide if it is reasonable, necessary and proportionate to perform the intervention and if it is, that it is proportionate. If a 'restrictive intervention' is used, the pupil's welfare during and after the intervention should be considered alongside the need for intervention.

School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the child.

A 'physical restrictive intervention' may be passive physical contact, such as physically interposing between children or standing in the way of a child; or active physical contact such as safely holding, or leading away from an incident.

DO

- Tell the child what you are doing and why in simple and clear language and repeat as necessary
- Be mindful of personal injury: do not put yourself at risk and be aware of your own health and well-being
- Use the minimum force necessary
- Involve another member of staff, immediately if possible, and keep a witness present at all times
- Tell the child what s/he must do for you to remove the restraint (may need repeating): give clear and limited choices
- Only use methods that you have learned in Step Up training
- Relax your restraint in response to the child's compliance

DON'T

- Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange or attempt to reason with the pupil
- Involve other children in the restraint - ever
- Use methods other than the ones you have learned in Step Up training

Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention that involves keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and preventing them from leaving. It should only be used to keep others safe when a pupil is showing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation and never as a punishment. The area used for seclusion should be safe and the pupil must be monitored at all times. The seclusion should last for as minimal a period as possible. Incidents of seclusion should be recorded and reported (see section 5: recording and reporting).

3. What is reasonable force?

The term ‘reasonable force’ covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.

Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a child to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a child needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.

‘Reasonable in the circumstances’ means using no more force than is needed.

As mentioned above, schools generally use force to control children and to restrain them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between children or blocking a child's path, or active physical contact such as leading a child by the arm out of a classroom.

Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a child under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two children are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.

School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the child.

Who can use reasonable force?

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force. This power applies to any member of staff at the school. It can also apply to people whom the Co-Headteachers have temporarily put in charge of children such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying children on a school organised visit.

Oak Green School uses Norfolk Steps positive handling techniques to deal with this issue. All staff involved in regular contact with those children at risk of needing this kind of intervention, will have received ‘STEPS’ training. Staff have five modules of training over the course of a year that covers behaviour management and supportive guiding techniques. Further physical intervention training is provided for the Behaviour Support Team.

When can reasonable force be used?

Reasonable force will only be used when immediately necessary and for the minimum time necessary to achieve the desired result and in order to prevent a child from doing or continuing to do any of the following:

- a child is attacking another person, or fighting, in such a way that injury is likely;
- a child is damaging, or is about to damage, personal or school property;
- a child is behaving in such an unruly way, for example by the misuse of equipment or dangerous substances, that injury to her/himself or to others, or damage to property, is likely;
- a child is attempting to leave the class or the school, or withdraw from the member of staff’s sphere of control, and there is a risk to her/his safety if (s)he does so;
- a child persistently refuses to obey an instruction to leave a classroom or work area;

- a child is behaving in a way that significantly disturbs or distracts other children, or otherwise disrupts a lesson or event at the school;
- a child is committing or is about to commit a criminal offence, or what would be a criminal offence if the child were not under the age of criminal responsibility.

The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.

The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can and cannot be used.

Schools can use reasonable force to:

- remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so
- prevent a child behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit
- prevent a child leaving the classroom where allowing the child to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others
- prevent a child from attacking another child, a member of staff, or to stop a fight in the playground
- restrain a child at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts
- prevent extreme destruction of property, e.g. windows if this is likely to or has caused injury

What counts as reasonable force?

Members of staff contemplating the use of force have to make an assessment of the situation, and do so quickly under what may be stressful conditions. They have to gauge:

- the seriousness of the conduct causing concern (the probability that significant harm or disorder will result if it is unchecked);
- the probability that non-forceful measures will be unsuccessful;
- the urgency with which control must be regained;
- the level of force that will be appropriate;
- additional risk factors that may affect how this particular situation is handled.

Schools cannot:

Use 'physical restrictive interventions', 'reasonable force' or seclusion as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment

4. Core Values:

National reports and guidelines from professional bodies over the years have identified some overarching core values expected from those supporting children and young people whose behaviour challenges:

- uphold children and young people's rights – children and young people with learning disabilities, autistic spectrum conditions, and mental health difficulties whose behaviour challenges have the same human rights as all children and young people and require additional help to overcome the difficulties their behaviour may present;
- treat children and young people with learning disabilities, autistic spectrum conditions, and mental health difficulties whose behaviour challenges as full and valued members of the community whose views and preferences matter;
- respect and invest in family carers as partners in the development and provision of support for children and young people with learning disabilities, autistic spectrum conditions and mental health difficulties; and
- recognise that all professionals and services have a responsibility to work together to coordinate support children and young people whose behaviour challenges, and their families

The following values relate specifically to the use of restraint. They were drawn up with reference to the Independent Restraint Advisory Panel's review of restraint systems used in secure children's homes but they are relevant to all of the settings and services to which this guidance applies:

- every child or young person deserves to be understood and supported as an individual;
- the best interests of children and young people and their safety and welfare should underpin any use of restraint;
- the risk of harm to children, young people and staff should be minimised. The needs and circumstances of individual children and young people, including their age, particular vulnerabilities, learning disability, medical condition or impairments, should be considered and balanced with the needs and circumstances of others. Decisions on whether or not to restrain or intervene with an individual, affect others, including staff; and;
- a decision to restrain a child or young person is taken to assure their safety and dignity and that of all concerned, including other children, young people or adults present.

Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention, 2019

Principles:

Our Positive Behaviour policy aims to encourage good behaviour through direct teaching, regular discussion of children's rights and responsibilities, and consistently applied rewards and sanctions. However, there may be rare occasions when the use of physical intervention may be necessary when normal methods have failed.

All members of the Sunflower team receive "Step Up" training on a regular basis; this is delivered by the PRU team. This focuses on developing a team approach to positive behaviour management, and includes training on safe ways to physically restrain children. Only members of staff who have received this training may actively restrain children.

Physical intervention may take place in school or during an authorised school activity off site, if circumstances so demand.

Circumstances in which restrictive interventions or reasonable force might be required are as follows:

Where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury to the child or to others, e.g. *a child attacks a member of staff or another child; children are fighting and refuse to respond to clear, repeated commands to stop.*

Where there is a developing risk of injury, or significant damage to property, e.g. *a child is engaged in or on the verge of committing, deliberate damage or vandalism to property; a child is causing, or at risk of causing, an injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials or objects.*

Where a child is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline, e.g. *a child persistently refuses an order to leave the classroom or is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting the lesson.*

The behaviour of children who require, or are likely to require, physical intervention will always be discussed with parents at the earliest opportunity. Parents will be involved in plans to improve the child's behaviour, with the support of external agencies where appropriate. Strategies for managing the child's behaviour in school will be made known to all staff who may come into contact with the child concerned.

5. Recording and Reporting:

Significant incidents involving 'restrictive intervention' (including seclusion) or 'reasonable force' (including restraint) must be immediately reported to the Co-Headteacher or, in their absence, a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The incident must be recorded as soon as possible using CPOMS and for incidents of restraint and or seclusion, these should be recorded as separate incidents following the specific CPOMS procedures.

All recordings will be read by the Co-Headteachers or delegated person, who may then interview all those who were involved or witnessed the incident and may also request additional written witness statements. The delegated person will then ensure that the parents or carers are informed, in writing, of the relevant facts. The member of staff who completed the record (having done the restraint or seclusion) cannot close the record on CPOMS- only the Co-Headteachers or delegated person can do this.

All incidents must be recorded in order to identify, monitor, track and provide evidence of pupil behaviour/injury etc. Records of restrictive interventions (including seclusion) and reasonable force (including restraint) are kept on CPOMS.

Other Physical Contact with Children:

There are occasions when physical contact with a child is proper and necessary, such as: holding a child's hand while walking in line or around the school; comforting a distressed child (teachers should use their professional judgement according to individual circumstances); giving praise, e.g. a touch on the shoulder);

coaching or demonstrating in PE or musical instrument lessons; giving first aid (refer to Adult Child Contact Policy).

6. Acceptable restraint procedures:

Guides, escorts and restraints:

These provide a graded and gradual response aimed at intervening with the appropriate amount of reasonable force. Restraints where two people are used will be deemed as a more restrictive hold.

As the level of physical intervention increases so does the risk of injury to all concerned; staff need to make a risk assessment based on the situation as to the level at which they are going to intervene.

If a child drops to the floor whilst in a hold, staff should follow, supporting themselves by their knees, avoiding having the child between their legs as the risk of being kicked or head-butted is likely to increase due to the position and proximity of the staff member. If possible, transfer to a seated position on a chair.

The following lists the possible Norfolk Step methods that trained staff may use if necessary:

Lone worker elbow tuck	Elbow tuck figure of 4	Elbow tuck figure of 4 standing
Elbow tuck kneeling	Elbow tuck to chair/bench/sofa	Emergency hold*

*Emergency hold – any hold (may not be listed) that is necessary within the use of reasonable force to prevent harm to a child or other children/staff members. Only to be used when all other options have been exhausted and an immediate response is needed to prevent risk of significant harm to either the child or children around them and /or staff members.

It is only possible to decide which of these options to take as one's experience, expertise and knowledge of the individual child grows, although inevitably they represent a gradual and graded increase in the extent of control used. The paramount decision should be based on 'Safety' for all concerned.

Emergency Interventions/dynamic risk assessment:

Emergency Interventions will involve staff employing, where necessary, one or a combination of the strategies mentioned in the previous section in response to an incident. This will occur when all other strategies have been exhausted or the incident requires a rapid physical response.

These interventions require professional judgement to be exercised in difficult situations. Any response made must be reasonable and proportionate and where possible carried out by trained staff.

7. Positive Intervention Plans:

Planned interventions involve staff employing, where necessary, one or a combination of the strategies mentioned in the previous section as an agreed response to an identified behaviour. This will be documented in a Positive Intervention Plan (PIP).

The PIP will list the accepted strategies to be used. These strategies will include both de-escalation methods and physical intervention techniques. The plan will also detail any responses which for whatever reason would be inappropriate. These plans will be written jointly by the class teacher, Co-Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Pupil and Family Support Assistant and SENDCo team.

PIPs will not be needed for all children. Children may demonstrate certain behaviours which are causing concern and it is these behaviours which are targeted. Children may behave in a manner other than that identified on the PIP and in such circumstances 'Emergency Interventions' would need to be undertaken.

8. Staff Training and Support:

Managing children, particularly those who exhibit challenging behaviour, is a very physically, emotionally and mentally demanding task. Children on this continuum can engender high levels of stress that must be recognised and managed appropriately. Class teams must be the first point of support with effective team discussion playing a major part in reducing anxiety and stress. Remember that every member is responsible for an effective team.

Staff will be given the opportunity to discuss incidents where physical restraint was employed and, in particular, to identify whether any alternative strategy might have been equally effective using non-physical intervention strategies. Staff will be given 'time out' after an incident and offered emotional support to talk through what happened as well as any first aid that may be required – all injuries must be recorded on Medical Tracker.

Children will also be given the opportunity to review what happened and to share their thoughts and feelings around this. Likewise, the parents/carers will be informed and invited to contribute their own views

This policy recognises an ongoing staff training need, with respect to management of behaviour and use of physical restraint and the Co-Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and SENDCo team will ensure that behaviour management occupies a proportion of the annual training programme.

The Co-Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and SENDCo team will also ensure all newly-appointed staff are introduced to this policy and given appropriate induction training. The whole staff will need ongoing updating of current information and strategies to manage a child's physical behaviour.

Teachers of children who may have specific restraint plans in place will be briefed fully about the plan and strategies for management of this will be discussed with them by the SENDCo team.

9. Debriefing arrangements:

The child and the member of staff will be checked for any sign of injury after an incident. First aid will be administered to anyone who requires it and recorded on Medical Tracker.

The child will be given time to become calm while staff continue to supervise him/her. When the child regains complete composure, a member of the Sunflower Team will discuss the incident with the child and try to ascertain the reason for its occurrence.

The child will be given the opportunity to explain things from his/her point of view. All necessary steps will be taken to re-establish the relationship between the child and the member(s) of staff involved in the incident.

All members of staff involved should be allowed a period of debrief and recovery from the incident, as well as supervision time.

The Co-Headteacher will be informed at the earliest opportunity of any incidents where positive handling was used. The Co-Headteacher or representative will meet with a minimum of one of the staff involved, gather accounts and sign off the record of the restraint that has been completed on CPOMS.

All parents will be informed after an incident where positive handling is used with a child. Parents will need to be notified sensitively and to be made aware of the full circumstances.

For instances of restraint, parents will be notified in writing of the incident as well as spoken to verbally.

10. Allegations against staff:

When an allegation of force is made by a child, key points to remember are:

All complaints about the use of force should be thoroughly, speedily and appropriately investigated.

Where a member of staff has acted within the law - that is, they have used reasonable force in order to prevent injury, damage to property or disorder - this will provide a defense to any criminal prosecution or other civil or public law action.

When a complaint is made the onus is on the person making the complaint to prove that his/her allegations are true - it is not for the member of staff to prove he/she has acted reasonably.

School should refer to the Conduct and discipline policy, appendix 1 where an allegation of excessive force is made against a teacher. This guidance makes clear that a person must not be suspended automatically, or without careful thought.

If a decision is made to suspend a member of staff, the school should ensure that the teacher has access to a named contact who can provide support.

The Governing body should always consider whether a teacher has acted within the law when reaching a decision on whether or not to take disciplinary action against the teacher.

Equal Opportunities Statement:

This policy applies to all and does not unlawfully discriminate because of the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, gender preference and sexual orientation.

Monitoring and Review:

This policy will be monitored by the school leadership team and reviewed by the school governors annually, or as new legislation determines, alongside the behaviour policy suite.

Links:

https://www.educare.co.uk/news/reasonable-force-when-may-it-be-used

Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention - June 2019

Related Documentation:

The Human Rights Act 1998

The Equality Act 2010

Mental Capacity Act 2005

Mental Health Act 1983

NICE Guidelines

Use of Restraint – Section 93, Education and Inspections Act 2006

Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention, 2019

Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools, 2026

Reviewed September 2026: in line with above documentation