AYSCOUGHFEE HALL SCHOOL

RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTION AND USE OF REASONABLE FORCE POLICY

Rationale

The School believes that to deny pupils all physical contact with adults is to deny a basic human need and expression of care and concern. However physical contact must be appropriate for the age, understanding and sex of the child and must never threaten or be sexually inappropriate**.**

Ayscoughfee Hall School does not operate a 'no physical contact' policy. In line with DfE guidance (April 2026) the school will not grant requests from parents or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions.

Staff do not require parental consent to use reasonable force on a pupil when it is deemed necessary under the conditions set out in this policy.

Related Policies

This policy must be read in conjunction with the following School policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Parental Complaints Policy

Aims of this Policy

- To protect every person in the school community from harm.
- To protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful.
- To provide adequate information and training for staff so that they are clear as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour and to deal effectively with violent or potentially violent situations.
- To raise awareness of who can support with restrictive interventions/reasonable force in school.

Staff to Whom this Policy Applies

- All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in the circumstances described above.
- The school will ensure that key members of staff are trained in the management of episodes of behaviour which may require restrictive interventions and/or the use of reasonable force.

The Headteacher, Theresa Wright, and the Early Years Lead Teacher, Emily Patman, are trained in Team Teach techniques and should be called upon wherever possible if the use of reasonable force may be required.

Guidelines

Guidelines on the use of force to control or restrict pupils are part of the School's Behaviour Policy. Restrictive interventions/reasonable force will not be used punitively. The School has a disciplinary approach based on positive reinforcement of acceptable behaviour.

All staff are familiar with the school's policy and have a clear understanding about when restrictive interventions and/or reasonable force is appropriate and how it should be applied. They also know when and how to get support from other staff.

Appropriate Physical Contact with Pupils

There are times when physical contact with pupils is both necessary and appropriate and at these times staff are expected to use it as such. The school does not operate a 'no physical contact policy' as to do so would both limit opportunities to give comfort and care when needed and potentially endanger any child who cannot be restrained to stop them hurting themselves or others.

Physical contact may be appropriate:

- 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, on a school trip, walking around school etc.
- To comfort a distressed pupil.
- To congratulate or praise a pupil, e.g. through a handshake, pat on the back etc.
- To demonstrate the use of a musical instrument.
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching.

When using physical contact, staff must be sensitive to:

- Cultural backgrounds.
- The need to maintain pupils' personal space.
- Any concerns that a pupil may have been sexually abused and will either seek physical contact or positively avoid it.

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

- The school's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.
- The individual circumstances (e.g. 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.
    - Any alternative strategies that do not include physical contact that can be used

Staff should not be alone with individual pupils except in certain circumstances (e.g. music lessons, 1:1 teaching etc.) It is advisable that classroom doors should be left open when one member of the staff is left supervising, talking with or teaching small groups or individual pupils.

The Use of Reasonable* Force to Control or Restrain Pupils.

This policy should be read in conjunction with *DfE Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (2026)* and takes into account the *Education Acts 1996 and 1997* which states reasonable force and restraint may be used to prevent a pupil from doing or continuing to do any of the following:

- Injuring themselves or others
- Causing damage to property including the pupil's own property.
- Committing a criminal offence.
- Engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order at the School or among any of its pupils, whether that behaviour occurs in a classroom during a teaching session or elsewhere.

**'reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed*.

Further information on key terminology used in this policy can be found in the DfE guidance 'Restrictive interventions and use of reasonable force, for schools (2026) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6943dad6501cdd438f4cf5aa/Restrictive_interventions_including_use_of_reasonable_force_in_schools.pdf

Prohibited Practices

The school does not permit:

- Any use of force as punishment
- Deliberate infliction of pain
- Holding a pupil in a position that restricts breathing
- Neck restraints
- Pain compliance techniques
- Restrictive interventions used for staff convenience
- Restrictive interventions used solely to secure compliance with instructions
- Seclusion used as a disciplinary sanction

Why Use Restrictive Interventions and/or Reasonable Force?

Restrictive interventions and/or reasonable force should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a child's action or perhaps by removing a physical object, which could be used to harm the child or others. It is only likely to be needed if a child appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and behaviour. It is not possible to define every circumstance in which restrictive interventions/reasonable force would be necessary or appropriate and staff will have to exercise their own judgement in situations which arise within the above categories. Staff should always act within the school's policy on behaviour, particularly in dealing with disruptive behaviour. This should only ever be used as a last resort; distraction techniques, calming techniques and a fresh staff member's face should all be used first wherever possible to support the child.

Staff should be aware that when they are in charge of children during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are to take reasonable action to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. Failure to manage a pupil who is subsequently injured or injures another, could, in certain circumstances, lead to an accusation of negligence. At the same time staff are not expected to place themselves in situations where they are likely to suffer injury as a result of their intervention.

When determining whether the use of restrictive interventions/reasonable force is necessary, staff should consider:

The necessity

- Are there more effective, less restrictive ways to manage the situation (see alternative strategies below)
- Will the intervention successfully reduce the relevant risks, or is it likely to escalate the situation further and cause more harm?
- Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.

Is the intervention proportionate?

- Staff should use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce the risks.
- If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy.
- Staff should consider the personal circumstances of the pupils such as medical conditions, SEND or other vulnerabilities as well as characteristics such as their age, size etc.

Alternative Strategies

There are some situations in which the need for restrictive interventions/reasonable force is immediate and where there are no equally effective alternatives (e.g. if a pupil is about to run across a road). However, in many circumstances, there are alternatives, e.g. use of assertiveness skills such as:

- The broken record, in which an instruction is repeated until the pupil complies
- Use of a distractor, such as a loud whistle, to interrupt the behaviour (such as a fight) long enough for other methods of verbal control to be effective.
- Withdrawal of attention (audience), e.g. if an action such as damage to property is threatened.
- Other techniques designed to defuse the situation, such as the avoidance of confrontation, or use of humour (in these cases the incident can be dealt with later when emotions are no longer running high).
- The employment of other sanctions consistent with the School's policy on behaviour.

The Use of Restrictive interventions/reasonable force

Restrictive interventions/reasonable force should be applied as an act of care and control with the intention of reestablishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the pupil to regain self-control. This should be a measure used for as little time as possible and only for the reasons of safety of the pupil requiring the measure, other pupils and staff being at risk of being hurt or significant damage to property. It should never take a form which could be seen as punishment. Staff are only authorised to use reasonable force in applying restrictive interventions/reasonable force, although there is no absolute definition of this, as what constitutes reasonable force depends upon the particular situation and the pupil to whom it is being applied. This will have been delivered to staff in specific training as to what reasonable force is and what specific measures are able to be used. This is the only physical contact that should be used, there are measures that can be used such as blocking students' pathways if this is going to prevent them from leaving the premises or stopping them from being aggressive towards others.

In all circumstances other methods such as distraction techniques should be used if appropriate. Effective restrictive interventions/reasonable force should be used as a last resort.

If at all possible, other children should be removed from the area of disruption rather than the disruptive pupil being removed.

When restrictive interventions/reasonable force becomes necessary:

DO

- Tell the pupil what you are doing and why, using very minimal language. For pupils with EAL or speech and language/sensory difficulties, aim to communicate in a manner that can be understood by the pupil wherever possible
- Use the minimum force necessary
- Involve another member of staff wherever possible
- Tell the pupil what he/she must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition)
- Use simple and clear language
- Relax your restraint in response to the pupil's compliance
- Seek to maintain pupil dignity

DON'T

- Act in temper – step away if you feel this is happening
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil
- Involve other pupils in the restraint or engage in conversation with them
- Touch or hold the pupil in inappropriate areas of their body
- 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
- Hurt the pupil in anyway, such as slap, punch, kick or trip

Whenever possible, it is imperative that other children are moved away from the area if restrictive interventions/reasonable force is likely to be needed. Staff have green cards that can be sent to summon other members of staff to assist.

Seclusion

Seclusion of a child – 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 child is highly emotional or behaviourally dysregulated. Seclusion is not a form of punishment and should not be used or threatened to be used as such by staff. Seclusion should:

- Be in a safe, secure and non-threatening environment
- Be non-intimidating and non-threatening to the pupil
- Be supervised at all times – preferably by two members of staff
- Be for the shortest possible amount of time
- Be reported in the same way as other restrictive interventions – including to parents
- Cease immediately once the risk of serious harm has reduced sufficiently for less restrictive measures to be used.

Pupils With Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities and Vulnerable Learners

Some children with SEND needs or those who are vulnerable may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves or others. In particular, pupils who are non-verbal may display their needs, discomforts or confusion through actions. This can lead to SEND pupils being disproportionately subject to the use of restrictive interventions.

Ayscoughfee Hall School aims to provide an inclusive and nurturing environment which takes into account the needs of all pupils. The school will, wherever possible, make reasonable adjustments to ensure that pupils with SEND and vulnerable learners are supported to manage their emotions and provide a culture and environment that allows pupils to express their needs in a safe and supported manner.

The school will devise a behaviour support plan, in conjunction with parents/carers (and the pupil if appropriate) for any pupil who may experience episodes of unregulated behaviour due to SEND or other life experiences.

Reporting/Recording an Incident Requiring Restrictive interventions/reasonable force (including interventions that do not involve physical contact and seclusion).

Restrictive interventions and the use of reasonable force often occur in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for a debriefing after the incident, both for staff involved and the pupil. The Headteacher, or in her absence, The Deputy Headteacher, should be informed of any incident as soon as possible and will take responsibility for making arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised. An appropriate member of the teaching staff (usually the class teacher) should be involved in debriefing the pupil involved. Any victims of the incident should be supported and parents informed.

An incident must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event. It should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.
Any record of an incident of the use of restrictive intervention/reasonable force must be fully detailed on My Concern ensuring the details below are included; this requirement applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour plan.

As a minimum, the following details must be included:

- The names of pupils 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.
- A brief account of why the use of force was assessed a necessary in that instance.
- Any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts.

In addition to the above, Ayscoughfee Hall School will undertake an evaluation of any incident that occurs, with a view to identifying best practice and areas for improvement for future incidents. To this end, we may also collect the following information:

- Details of any witnesses to the incident and, if appropriate, witness statements.
- Details of when and how parents were notified.
- Details of any follow up action.
- Any other relevant information which will help to develop practice.

The Headteacher will record any such incident in the Restrictive Interventions/Reasonable Force Log. Whenever another adult has acted as a witness to the incident, they should complete a written statement explaining the circumstances of the incident and add this to the My Concern file.

Parents will be informed by the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher if it has been necessary to use reasonable force with their child. As a minimum the following information will be given to parents:

- Time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- Brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary
- Brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force
- Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable this information should, wherever possible, be given either face to face or by telephone in the first instance and must be followed up in writing by email. Parents will be invited into school for a follow-up discussion, aimed at preventing, where possible, any future incidents or identifying what might be done differently to reduce escalation of the behaviour.

Exceptions to the requirement to report are:

- The pupil is aged 20 or over.
- It appears to the staff member that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. In this instance, the staff member must report the incident to any parent who it can be reported to without resulting in significant harm or, if there are none, to the local authority within whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident.
- If any of the above are true, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be involved in any action taken.

The Headteacher shares the Restrictive Interventions/Reasonable Force Log with the board of governors via half-termly meetings with the Safeguarding governor.

If the behaviour that necessitated the use of restrictive interventions/reasonable force is part of an ongoing pattern, it may be necessary to address the situation through the development of a Behaviour Management Plan. This will be drawn up in conjunction with the SENDCo, pupil, class teacher and parents.

After any incident of restrictive interventions/reasonable force, the senior leadership team with consider the circumstances precipitating the incident to explore ways in which future incidents can be avoided.

Risk Assessment

- All staff including teachers, teaching assistants and other colleagues in the school must be informed about pupils and families who are vulnerable or volatile.
- Vulnerable or volatile pupils and families should be clearly identified in documentation. Pupils will be identified on the SEND register, which is shared with all staff, and any specific paper, such as ASPs or risk assessments will be included in the individual pupil's section within the class Additional Needs folder.
- A risk assessment based on knowledge and previous experience will be carried out and a plan of action for individuals written by a delegated member of staff.

Complaints

Any allegation relating to the use of restrictive intervention or reasonable force will be managed in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, staff disciplinary procedures and the current version of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

This policy was approved by the Governing Body on 30th June 2026

Any reference to the word 'School' implicitly includes all its associated clubs/activities including Kids Club. This policy also applies to EYFS

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