



CASTLE COURT SCHOOL

Restrictive Interventions Policy

Castle Court School has a duty of care to the pupils while at school, including EYFS and we will do all that is reasonably practicable to safeguard and promote children's welfare.

This policy must be read in conjunction with:

First Aid Policy

Intimate Care Policy

Staff Code of Conduct

Child Protection Policy

CPSU Briefing – Physical Contact in Sport

Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusion Policy

DfES guidance: Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools, April 2026

Reviewed: January 2026

Due for Review: January 2027

P Dunsford

(Designated Safeguarding Lead)

Principles

The Governing Body, Head and staff will act in accordance with Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 and in compliance with 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2025), 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2023) and Dorset Safeguarding Children Board's Inter-Agency Safeguarding Procedures to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at this school. The Governing Body, Head and staff will act in accordance with the supplementary DfES guidance: Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools, April 2026

Castle Court School takes its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children and young people in its care extremely seriously. We are committed to ensuring that all staff who find themselves having to make physical contact with children will always undertake their duties in a professional manner and we acknowledge that these adults are in a position of great trust. We recognise the need to treat all children, whatever their age, gender, disability, religion, or ethnicity, with respect. No child should be attended to in a way that causes unnecessary distress or pain.

As a school, we recognise that the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, can have a significant impact on the pupils, staff members and parents involved, as well as the wider classroom. However, there are times when the use of restrictive interventions will be lawful and necessary; for example, to keep individuals and the wider school community safe (Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools, April 2026, P3)

Especially within the EYFS setting there will be occasions when the staff will need to have some form of physical contact with the children in their care. Castle Court School recognises that at times close, physical contact is necessary to help children in our care to develop into well-balanced, secure, and happy individuals. The school is however aware of the need for clear boundaries for physical contact to protect everyone involved.

Castle Court School understands the importance of minimising the need to use restrictive interventions through prevention and de-escalation measures.

Whole-school measures can include:

- consideration of how the school and classroom environment can support all pupils to achieve and thrive
- sharing best practice for whole-class behaviour management, and for managing communal spaces such as corridors and playgrounds
- training staff in effective communication strategies, such as using appropriate tone of voice and empathy to aid de-escalation
- development of working staff-pupil relationships and trust
- recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning

Individual approaches can include:

- working closely with parents to support individual pupils
- strategies to support individual pupils based on their identified needs, including the development of behaviour support plans. Where a pupil has a disability, schools have a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010 to support pupils with reasonable adjustments, making sure they can benefit from what the school offers
- giving pupils time, space, and strategies to calm down before their behaviour escalate

Terminology and Procedure

Restrictive intervention is defined as a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. It is used as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways (Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools, April 2026, P5)

Other definitions given in the above guidance are as follows:

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.

Who can use reasonable force?

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.

Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions will be adequately trained in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies.

Use of reasonable force to search pupils

The Head and the staff they authorise have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a **prohibited** item. A member of staff can use such force as is reasonable to search for legally prohibited items, but not to search for items **banned** under the school rules. See the Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusion policy for further details of prohibited and banned items.

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. Where appropriate, the pupil should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. For any form of restraint, including seated and standing, there is a risk of physical and psychological harm, and it should be avoided where possible.

Other physical contact with pupils

The DfES published advice, Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools, April 2026, P7, states that schools should **not** have a 'no contact' policy and **do not** require parental consent to use force on a student. It also advises schools not to grant any requests by parents or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions. This is because the adoption of a 'no contact' policy could leave staff unable to intervene in circumstances where they may need to protect pupils and/or themselves.

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 self-regulate
- 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 and physical contact and restraint 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 difficulties, it would be culturally inappropriate to do so or there are other vulnerabilities such as adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) to consider.

(Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools, April 2026, P7-8)

Seclusion

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 will be recorded and reported in accordance with the procedures outlined in the section on 'Recording and reporting duties' in this policy. Seclusion is not a disciplinary

response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. There are other disciplinary measures that can be used to deal with this such as removal from the classroom.

Determining when use of restrictive interventions is appropriate

The decision on whether it is reasonable to use a restrictive intervention depends on the individual circumstances of each situation. To make this assessment, the member of staff should consider whether:

Is it necessary?

- Staff should consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation.
- Staff should assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks, or whether its use would escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself.
- Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.

Is it proportionate?

- Staff should use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce the relevant 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 pupil such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.¹⁴

Have you considered the pupil's welfare?

- Staff should consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. For example, pupils who have experienced an adverse life event, with diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, past trauma or neglect, communication difficulties, or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.
- Staff should seek to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity. This may include, where possible, considering the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.
- Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and explain what the pupil needs to do.
- For pupils with difficulties with speech, language, and communication, or with English as an additional language, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies should be used to ensure the pupil understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.
- Staff should seek to understand how the pupil is feeling and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced, or stopped.

This list of factors is not exhaustive, and staff should also consider other relevant considerations. Training on the use of restrictive interventions should equip staff to judge when it is appropriate to use restrictive interventions, including in situations where quick decisions are needed. It should also help staff understand how to assess whether their response is reasonable under pressure.

If an assessment has been made to use restrictive interventions, staff should be supported in their decision making.

Consideration for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

Some children and young people with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Triggers may include pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar situations or environments or feelings of fear and anxiety. Pupils who are non-verbal or find verbal communication challenging may express their needs, discomfort, or confusion through actions. This can lead to pupils with SEND being disproportionately subject to the use of restrictive interventions. Castle Court School will seek to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour so that we can provide proactive support, create an inclusive environment and consider the impact of school policies on pupils with SEND. For example, we will consider how the school culture and environment may be experienced differently by pupils with SEND and seek to support pupils to cope with situations that they may find distressing. We will always seek to utilise staff who know individual pupils well to help identify and manage risk such as trigger points when challenging behaviour is more likely to occur and develop proactive strategies to reduce the likelihood of restrictive interventions being used. We will also work with the pupil, parents, and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

Depending on the circumstances, examples of strategies may include:

- removing stimuli that may be causing distress
- changing body language, facial expression, and/or tone of voice
- supporting the pupil to express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- engaging the pupil in an activity which can help them manage their feelings of anxiety
- distracting the pupil in something that interests them or by introducing familiar objects and activities to redirect their attention

Where appropriate, school staff will work with pupils with SEND and their parents in the co-production of any necessary behaviour support plans. Behaviour support plans will outline any adjustments, such as to address aspects of the school environment which the pupil finds challenging and ways for pupils to communicate their needs effectively.

Behaviour support plans will detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil. This will be discussed in conjunction with the relevant people, such as teachers, parents, the pupil, pastoral staff or health professionals, and parameters around its use stated clearly in the plan. Where there is an identified risk, such as increased likelihood in the need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions, Castle Court School will have risk assessments in place and where possible, mitigate risks such as through training and prevention strategies.

Whether the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate will depend on the circumstances, irrespective of whether it has been considered as part of a behaviour support plan. Any behaviour support plans will be reviewed with the pupil and their parent periodically and following any significant incident, so that changes can be made based on evidence of what has worked and what has not worked in practice for the individual pupil. Where a pupil has a disability, the school has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to take reasonable steps to avoid disadvantage so that the pupil can fully participate in the education provided by the school, and that they can enjoy the other benefits, facilities and services that the school provides for pupils

Pupil and staff support

Castle Court School will evaluate all incidents involving the use of restrictive intervention as soon as practicable after the event to understand why it was used, the impact on pupils and staff, any patterns and trends, and how the use of restrictive interventions might be avoided in future, for example by amending or introducing a behaviour support plan. If appropriate, the pupil and staff member involved should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. Incidents in which a member of staff uses reasonable force or seclusion on a pupil must be recorded as described in 'Recording and reporting duties' in this policy.

In addition, any injuries should be recorded in accordance with the school's procedures and reported as appropriate to the Health and Safety Executive. As a school, we will hold a follow-up conversation(s) to facilitate reflection, learning and to support pupil and staff wellbeing. This conversation will be framed as part of the overall debriefing process, looking to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from both the staff and pupils involved, as well as to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue. This process will ideally be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident and may also benefit from the presence of an additional person to ensure impartiality and support.

Recording and reporting duties

Recording the use of force

Castle Court School has robust procedures in place for the recording of any incident where restrictive interventions have taken place. Incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event. They should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved and this should be done on the same day as the occurrence. The requirement to record applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

Castle Court school asks all staff to complete a written record of any physical interventions. See 'Physical Intervention Record' Appendix 1. The member(s) of staff involved must advise the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), the head and/or a member of the Leadership Team immediately following an incident and provide a written report as soon as possible afterwards.

The report must include:

- WHO: The name(s) of the pupil(s) involved. This includes any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability.
- WHEN: The time and date of the incident.
- WHERE: The location of the incident.
- WITNESSES: The name(s) of any other staff or pupils who witnessed the incident.
- WHY: The reason the physical intervention was necessary.
- WHAT: How the incident began and progressed.
- OUTCOME: The pupil's(s') response and the outcome of the incident.
- WHAT ELSE: Details of any injury suffered by the pupil(s), staff, and/or damage to property.

Reporting the use of force

Parents must be informed at the earliest opportunity of any incident involving the use of restrictive interventions.

A report of the incident made to parents should include the following details as a minimum:

- time, date, location, and approximate duration of the intervention
- brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
- brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force
- details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable

The requirement to report applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

Castle Court school will communicate this information to parents in person or by phone but also in writing, for example, via email. If deemed appropriate, parents will be invited in to have a follow-up discussion about the incident. This can involve a discussion about:

- whether any agreed behaviour support plans were followed
- what de-escalation strategies were used and how effective they were
- what might be done differently in the future

The school may use this information to amend any existing behaviour support plans, as needed.

A record of the written communication to parents (and any follow up meetings) and the incident record itself will be uploaded to the child's My Concern file and made available to parents/carers on request.

The school will always carry out a review to reflect upon how the incident was dealt with, whether restrictive interventions could have been avoided and how to learn from it moving forwards.

Recording and reporting the use of seclusion and non-force related restraint

An incident of restraint may occur with or without direct physical contact. For restraint incidents that occur without direct physical contact, for example, the removal of a walking aid, these must be recorded and reported under the procedures outlined above.

Governors

The governing body of Castle Court School takes all reasonable steps to ensure that the school's procedures for recording and reporting the use of force and seclusion and restraint are complied with. The safeguarding governor, when meeting with the DSL, can ask to view records and reports where restrictive interventions have taken place. In this way, the governing body can review and interrogate data on restrictive interventions to ensure school leaders:

- identify and implement improvements to policies and practices, particularly where approaches have been used for some time but have not been effective.
- identify areas of learning and development for school staff, supporting specific departments and teachers to improve understanding and practice.
- understand pupils' repeat patterns and triggers to interrogate the effectiveness of pupil support measures, share this information with teachers who work with those pupils to better support them and, where appropriate, their parents, to establish a behaviour support plan or revise an existing plan.
- identify any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to pupils who share protected characteristics, have SEN, or other types of vulnerability

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

Appendix 1:

Restrictive Intervention Record - FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

Name of Staff Member:

Name/s of pupil/s involved:

Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil:

Date of incident:

Time of incident:

Location of incident:

Name/s of other who witnessed the incident (pupils and staff):

Description of the incident (please include any contextual information and be as descriptive as possible):

Steps taken to avoid intervention being used:

Nature of intervention used:

How did the pupil respond?

Details of any injury suffered by the pupil/ another pupil / member of staff and any damage to property:

Was contact made with parent/carer and, if so, by what means and when?

Outcome of incident:

Signed:

Date:

Review of process: