



The Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School

Positive Handling Policy

SLT Lead: P Gibbins

Reviewed by SLT: July 2026

Governor Committee Approval: Behaviour & Safety

Review Date: July 2027

The school's vision

Jesus said: "I have come that they may have life, life in all its fullness." This serves as the cornerstone of our school community. By fostering a culture of positive learning experiences rooted in core Christian values, we aim to equip our students for a life of resilience, fulfilment, and meaningful contribution to society.

This policy supports our school vision and ethos.

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1. Rationale

- This policy is based on guidance from the Department for Education. It is intended to provide clarification on the use of force to help school staff feel more confident about using this power when they feel it is necessary and to make clear the responsibilities of school leaders and governing bodies in respect of this power.
- This advice replaces "The use of force to control and restrain students – Guidance for schools in England".

This policy will be reviewed each year to reflect updated government guidance and the developing needs and profile of the school.

2. Key Points

- School staff have a legal power to use force and lawful use of the power will provide a defence to any related criminal prosecution or other legal action.
- Suspension should not be an automatic response when a member of staff has been accused of using excessive force.
- Senior school leaders should support their staff when they use this power.

Terminology used:

- **Restrictive intervention:** a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a student. This guidance uses 'restrictive interventions' as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain students in different ways.
- **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 students and staff as described in 'Other physical contact with students' 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 student 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 student or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact.

3. Reasonable force

What is reasonable force?

- The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions that may be used by school staff at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with students.

- Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a student to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a student 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 students and to restrain them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between students or blocking a student's path, or active physical contact such as leading a student by the arm out of a classroom.
- Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a student under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, including but not exclusive of for example when two students are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention or a student is actively damaging property.
- 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 student.

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 head teacher has temporarily put in charge of students such as unpaid volunteers or parents/carers accompanying students on a school organised visit.

When can reasonable force be used?

- Intervention is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.
- The following is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can and cannot be used.

Schools can use reasonable force to prevent or stop a student from:

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

Unacceptable use of positive interventions:

- Use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

BHBS will:

- Only ever use reasonable force as a last resort. Every effort will be made to de-escalate any situation that could lead to physical intervention.

Using reasonable force to search students

- The headteacher and any member of staff authorised by the headteacher have a statutory power to search a student or their belongings if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the student may have a prohibited item

(as listed in the DfE's searching, screening and confiscation guidance) or an item banned under our school rules.

- They can use reasonable force to search for prohibited items (as listed in the DfE's searching, screening and confiscation guidance), such as knives, weapons, stolen items or illegal drugs.
- The decision to use reasonable force to carry out a search should be made carefully, on a case-by-case basis and taking into consideration the level of risk to students and staff.

A panel of experts identified that certain restraint techniques presented an unacceptable risk when used on children and young people. The techniques in question are:

- the 'seated double embrace' which involves two members of staff forcing a person into a sitting position and leaning them forward, while a third monitors breathing.
- the 'double basket-hold' which involves holding a person's arms across their chest.
- the 'nose distraction technique' which involves a sharp upward jab under the nose.

4. Processes

Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a student confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving – it should only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a student is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. We only use seclusion as a safety measure when a student is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. Seclusion is not used as a threat or punishment. Seclusion is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour.

Staff training

- Our school will make sure that all staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions are adequately trained in their safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies.
- We also have a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of our staff. Therefore, we carry out risk assessments to ensure that staff who regularly work alongside students where the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions may be required can do so as safely as possible.

Telling parents and carers when restrictive interventions has been used on their child

- We will inform parents/carers about an incident as soon as we can after it happens and will endeavour to do this on the same day. We will do this even if the use of restrictive interventions is agreed as part of a student's support plan.
- If a member of staff thinks that telling the student's parents/carers would likely result in significant harm to that student. In these cases, we will report the incident to any parent(s)/carer(s) who it can be reported to without resulting

in significant harm or, if there are none, to the local authority where the student ordinarily resides

- When we report significant incidents involving force to parents/carers, we will include the following details:
 - The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
 - A brief explanation of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that situation
 - A short description of the type and degree of force that was used
 - Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- When reporting to parents/carers, we will have regard to data protection requirements when deciding what information to share. For example, we will not include any identifying details of any other student.

At BHBS

- Records are kept on of any Restrictive Interventions
- A debrief is conducted with child and family
- A debrief is conducted with staff with subsequent planning and updates planned for, if appropriate.

In deciding what is a serious incident, school staff should use their professional judgment and also consider the following:

- The student's behaviour and level of risk presented at the time of the incident
- The degree of force used
- The effect on the student or member of staff
- The students age

What happens if a student complains when a restrictive Intervention is used on them?

- Any complaints about the use of restrictive interventions will be handled through our school's complaints policy, which can be found on the BHBS website.
- We take any allegation of inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions made against a member of staff very seriously. We will deal with allegations in line with the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education.

What about other physical contact with students?

There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to have some physical contact with students 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 students, such as holding the hand of a student 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 student to a space they have chosen to access to self-regulate
- to comfort a distressed student

- to congratulate or praise a student, 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 safeguarding and child protection (or any other relevant) policy
- the applicable circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present
- the individual student's age
- any other material factors, including but not limited to whether:
 - the student has SEND or other vulnerabilities
 - any alternative strategies that do not include physical contact can be used

Family, Student and Staff understanding of Restrictive Intervention in Schools.

- Restrictive Intervention is an emotive and divisive subject for many philosophical and personal reasons. Within the area of Special Educational Needs and particularly in the management of young people who may present significantly challenging behaviours, it is however, an issue that presents itself with more frequency than in some other areas of education. It is therefore essential that, to prevent a misunderstanding of motive, justification, application or recording, all parties are consistently and fully informed of and understand the appendix.
- There are processes that will support a full understanding. These processes begin before a student enters the school, to the point where restrictive intervention may have been used, and beyond when the student is re-entering the learning environment.

Recording a Restrictive Intervention

The recording of a restrictive intervention should be standardised to support accuracy and availability of information. The following steps should be applied in all cases:

- All records of restrictive intervention should be completed on the restrictive intervention form and sent to the DSL who will ensure it is recorded on MyConcern.
- The member of staff who initiated the intervention is the person who does the documentation/ report/write up of the incident. Details and witness statements can be contributed to the initial report if required.
- The report must be completed before the end of the working day, and ideally before a member of staff leaves the school site. This ensures that should the report be needed for safeguarding purposes, it is immediately available, communicating transparency of process and good practice.
- Before a student leaves the school site, following a restrictive intervention, clarity should be sought, and a record made of
 - Any specific aspect of the restrictive intervention that the student is not happy with or wishes to make a complaint about

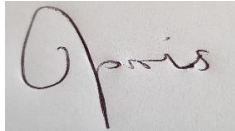
- Any marks that have been caused by the restrictive intervention or that were present before the intervention, which may be confused with those potentially gained in the incident.
- Whether a medical check has been offered, done or is required
- Whether a student refused to cooperate with the acquisition of this information
- On gaining this information, it should be shared with the DSL/Headteacher and then relayed to parents/carers by a member of the Senior Leadership or Pastoral teams. The relaying of this information should be documented.
- On all occasions parents/carers should be notified if their child has had restrictive intervention. This should, on all occasions, take place on the day that the restrictive intervention took place, and at the earliest appropriate opportunity.
- If a child is in the care of the Local Authority (LAC/CiC) their Social Worker should be notified, on all occasions, on the day of the incident. This communication should be documented and supported in an email.
- When the student is in a conducive frame of mind, they should be given the opportunity to be debriefed as to the reasons for the intervention, and to develop strategies or contribute to a plan that will reduce the likelihood of a re-occurrence.
- The student, when in a conducive frame of mind, should be given the opportunity to read the report, or have it read to them, so they can make comment on its content and accuracy.
- Signatures, confirming the content of the report, should be sought from:
 - all staff who are named in the report
 - the student involved
 - parent/carer following debrief
 - the Headteacher or member of SLT
 - Social Worker if appropriate (LAC/CiC)
- The report will contain the following details.
 - 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
- Completed reports, that have been signed and annotated after a debrief should be scanned and saved as a PDF. This allows BHBS will securely log and save learner and parent/carer agreement of any intervention and outcomes discussed within the recording section of MyConcern.
- Reports related to past students will be archived confidentially.
- A staff debrief should be offered by the DSL.
- Staff should have access to support, supervision & Occupational Health support where appropriate. Deputy Headteachers, in consultation with the Headteacher, or the Headteacher will coordinate support.

Monitoring and Review

- The Senior Leadership Team should have 'Restrictive Intervention' as a standing agenda item at each weekly business meeting.
- Multiple incidents of Restrictive Intervention, for an individual student, will trigger a review by the DSL to formulate a plan to minimise any further incidents.

- Multiple incidents of Restrictive Intervention, for an individual student, should, if appropriate, trigger multi-agency planning in order to construct an agreed approach to student management.
- Any incident requiring a significant Restrictive Intervention will require a review with the family before the student rejoins the Bishop's community.
- Governors are to have breakdown of Restrictive Intervention for each term.
- The Safeguarding Governor should, each term, audit guidance and practice regarding the application of Restrictive Intervention.

Approved by Full Governing Body



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Chairman

July 2026

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Date