Sycamore Trust
Grow together, Learn forever

Use of Restrictive Interventions Policy
(Including reasonable force and seclusion)

Adopted by: The Sycamore Church of England Trust Ltd

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Record of Procedures Changes and Reviews

Date	Details	Reason for Review/Change
July 2026	Creation of policy	

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1. Aims and scope

The trust is committed to creating a safe, secure and supportive environment for all pupils and staff.

There are occasions when the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and (in exceptional circumstances) seclusion, is lawful and necessary to keep people safe. However, the trust recognises that such interventions can have a significant impact on pupils, staff and families. They will only ever be used as a **last resort**, once all appropriate prevention and de-escalation strategies have been exhausted.

This policy aims to:

- Minimise the need to use restrictive interventions through effective early support, prevention and de-escalation
- Ensure staff understand how to use restrictive interventions safely, appropriately and lawfully
- Clearly set out the requirements for recording, reporting and reviewing incidents
- Protect the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all pupils and staff across the trust

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on Department for Education guidance relating to the use of reasonable force in schools and relevant safeguarding guidance.

It reflects the requirements of:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- Department for Education guidance on searching, screening and confiscation

The trust will also act in accordance with **any relevant statutory requirements relating to the recording and reporting of restraint and seclusion**.

3. Definitions

Restrictive interventions are actions that prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body or part of the body.

Reasonable force refers to actions involving physical contact which are necessary and proportionate to prevent harm, using the least amount of force for the shortest possible time.

Restraint is a non-disciplinary intervention that limits a pupil's movement.

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention that confines a pupil away from others and prevents them from leaving for safety reasons.

Trust position on seclusion

Seclusion:

- Is not a disciplinary sanction and must never be used as punishment
- Must only be used in **exceptional circumstances where there is an immediate risk of harm**
- Must not be used as a planned or routine strategy
- Must not take place in permanent or designated "seclusion rooms" unless subject to **explicit risk assessment and trust approval**

A **serious incident** is any use of restrictive intervention where:

- Injury occurs
- Force may be perceived as excessive
- There is repeated use involving the same pupil
- There is potential for complaint, allegation or external scrutiny
- The incident involves vulnerable pupils or raises safeguarding concerns

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The Trust Board (Trustees)

The Trust Board has strategic accountability for the effectiveness and lawful implementation of this policy across all schools within the trust. The Trust Board is responsible for:

- Approving this policy and ensuring it is reviewed in line with statutory requirements
- Assuring itself that all schools comply with relevant legislation, including the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Equality Act 2010, and Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Receiving and scrutinising trust-level analysis of the use of restrictive interventions, including:
    - Frequency and patterns of use
    - Any disproportionality, particularly relating to pupils with SEND or protected characteristics
- Holding the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to account for the effective implementation, monitoring and review of this policy
- Ensuring that appropriate systems are in place across the trust for training, recording, reporting and quality assurance

4.2 Local Academy Committees (LACs)

Local Academy Committees provide local oversight and assurance at school level. They are responsible for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy within their academy
- Receiving regular reports from the headteacher on the use of restrictive interventions
- Scrutinising data to ensure practice is:
    - Lawful
    - Proportionate
    - Consistent with the trust's expectations and values
- Challenging leaders where there are concerns, including:
    - Repeated use of restrictive interventions
    - Ineffective de-escalation strategies

    - Disproportionate impact on specific groups of pupils
- Escalating any significant concerns to the Trust Board via established governance channels

4.3 Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Trust Executive Team

The CEO, supported by the Trust Executive Team, is responsible for ensuring consistent and effective implementation of this policy across all academies. This includes:

- Providing clear trust-wide expectations for the use of restrictive interventions
- Ensuring that all academies have appropriate systems in place for:
    - Recording and reporting incidents
    - Safeguarding oversight
    - Monitoring and review
- Overseeing trust-wide training and ensuring compliance with agreed training standards
- Monitoring patterns, trends and risks across the trust, including:
    - Frequency and severity of incidents
    - Variations between academies
    - Disproportionate use involving vulnerable groups
- Identifying where additional support, intervention or review is required in individual academies
- Ensuring that serious incidents or concerns are escalated and managed in line with safeguarding procedures, including referral to external agencies where appropriate

4.4 Headteachers

Headteachers are accountable for the implementation of this policy within their school. They are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the policy is applied consistently and in line with trust expectations
- Promoting a culture where restrictive interventions are only used as a last resort
- Ensuring that staff are appropriately trained in:
    - Prevention and de-escalation strategies
    - The safe and lawful use of restrictive interventions

- Ensuring that all incidents are:
    - Recorded accurately and promptly
    - Reviewed by a senior leader
    - Reported in line with statutory and trust requirements
- Monitoring the use of restrictive interventions within the academy and taking action where patterns or concerns are identified
- Reporting regularly to the Local Governing Body and contributing to trust-level monitoring
- Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are followed where concerns arise, including referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where required

4.5 All Staff

All staff have a duty to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of pupils and to act in accordance with this policy. They are responsible for:

- Following the principles set out in this policy and related safeguarding procedures
- Using preventative and de-escalation strategies wherever possible
- Exercising professional judgement to ensure that any use of restrictive intervention is:
    - Necessary
    - Proportionate
    - Used for the shortest possible time
- Recording all relevant incidents accurately and as soon as possible after the event
- Reporting incidents to the designated safeguarding lead and/or senior leaders in line with academy procedures
- Taking part in required training and reflective practice following incidents

4.6 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL has specific responsibility for safeguarding oversight in relation to restrictive interventions. The DSL is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all incidents involving restrictive intervention are reviewed from a safeguarding perspective

- Ensuring that parents/carers are informed in line with statutory requirements, unless doing so would place the child at risk of harm
- Maintaining secure and accurate safeguarding records
- Identifying patterns or concerns that may indicate wider safeguarding risks
- Liaising with the headteacher and Trust safeguarding lead where concerns arise
- Ensuring that referrals to external agencies (including children's social care or the LADO) are made where appropriate

4.7 Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)

The SENCO plays a key role in supporting pupils who may be more vulnerable to the use of restrictive interventions. The SENCO is responsible for:

- Supporting the development and review of behaviour support plans and risk assessments
- Ensuring that staff understand the needs of pupils with SEND and appropriate strategies to support them
- Advising on reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010
- Monitoring the impact of restrictive interventions on pupils with SEND
- Contributing to the review of incidents and identifying actions to reduce future risk
- Supporting staff training and development in relation to SEND and behaviour

5. Acceptable uses of force

All staff have a legal power to use reasonable force to:

- Prevent injury to a pupil, themselves or others
- Prevent serious damage to property
- Prevent a criminal offence
- Maintain good order and discipline

6. Unacceptable uses of force

Force must never be used as punishment.

The following are **never acceptable**:

- Any action that restricts breathing or circulation
- Pressure to neck, chest or abdomen
- Deliberate use of force on the ground

7. Using reasonable force to search pupils

The headteacher and any member of staff authorised by the headteacher have a statutory power to search a pupil or their belongings if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil 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. They **cannot** use reasonable force to search for items that are banned under our school rules only, such as mobile phones.

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 pupils and staff. Please see our behaviour policy for more information on how we conduct searches.

8. Prevention and de-escalation strategies

Restrictive intervention is used only when necessary. We aim to minimise its use as much as possible, using both whole-school and individual approaches.

Our whole-school approach includes:

- Consideration of how each 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

The individual approaches we use 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
    - Strategies to help pupils calm down before their behaviour escalates
    - Making 'reasonable adjustments' where a pupil has a disability, to help them participate in school life as fully as possible

8.1 De-escalation when a situation arises

When a staff member is faced with a situation where a restrictive intervention may need to be used, they should consider using de-escalation techniques first, wherever possible. Techniques that could be used in these situations include:

- Having open body language and being aware of a pupil's personal space
- Taking a pupil away from an 'audience' – speaking to them on their own rather than in front of a group of other pupils or staff
- Using empathy – asking the pupil to help you understand their feelings
- Distraction techniques
- Offering a calm space for the pupil to go to so they can self-regulate
- Verbal warnings – calmly reminding the pupil of the consequences of their behaviour

9. Deciding when the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate

9.1 Necessity and proportionality

The decision on whether to use restrictive interventions is down to the professional judgment of the staff member and will always depend on the individual circumstances of each situation.

Staff should always consider whether there are other ways to manage the situation, such as the de-escalation techniques outlined in section 8.1 of this policy and/or seeking assistance from a colleague. However, there may be times when staff have no other choice but to use restrictive interventions, to reduce the risk of harm to the pupil and/or others.

When assessing whether a restrictive intervention is required, staff should always consider:

Is it necessary?

- Are there other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage the situation?
- Is a restrictive intervention likely to successfully reduce the risks, or could its use escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself?

Is it proportionate?

- Staff should use the **least** amount of force or the **least** restrictive intervention 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 individual circumstances of the pupil, such as their age, size and any medical conditions, SEND or other vulnerabilities

9.2 Pupil and staff welfare

Pupil welfare

The most important consideration when using a restrictive intervention is the safety and wellbeing of the pupil involved, as well as the safety of other pupils and staff. Staff should always consider the potential impact on the pupil's welfare balanced against any actions taken. For example, staff should bear in mind that pupils who have experienced adverse life events, trauma or neglect, or who have diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, communication difficulties or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.

If a restrictive intervention is needed, staff should always aim to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity. This includes consideration of the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.

Staff should, wherever possible, clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and what the pupil needs to do, including using verbal and non-verbal strategies where needed, and giving time for the pupil to process information and respond where appropriate.

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.

Support following an incident

As soon as possible after any use of restrictive intervention, our school will evaluate the incident to understand why restrictive intervention was used, the impact on pupils and staff, any patterns and trends, and how another incident could be avoided in the future.

Our school will make sure each pupil and staff member involved get the right support, including a medical assessment and treatment if needed, and an opportunity to reflect on and talk through the incident.

This follow-up conversation(s) will be part of the overall debriefing process to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from all parties involved. Conversations should also aim to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue.

Wherever possible, this process will be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident. It may also include the presence of an additional person to ensure impartiality and support. The school will continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed.

Depending on the circumstances, support may also be offered to those who witnessed the incident.

10. Considerations for pupils with SEND

We understand that pupils with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Pupils who have difficulty communicating verbally might show their needs and discomfort through their actions.

Our school is committed to understanding what might trigger challenging behaviour in pupils with SEND, and to providing the right support and an inclusive environment.

We will carry out risk assessments for pupils with SEND, where we identify that there is an increased likelihood of needing to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions. Our school is aware of its duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities to avoid disadvantage and ensure they can take part in school life as fully as possible.

We will 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, their parents/carers and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

These strategies might include:

- Removing stimuli that may be causing distress to the pupil
- Staff members changing how they communicate with the pupil, such as being more mindful of body language, facial expressions and/or tone of voice
- Helping the pupil express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- Engaging the pupil in activities to help them regulate their emotions
- Distracting the pupil with familiar objects or activities to redirect their attention

Where appropriate, we will create individual behaviour support plans for pupils with SEND. The plan will be reviewed regularly, and following any significant incident, with the pupil and parents to make sure it's still working well. The plan will:

- Outline any adjustments, such as to address aspects of the school environment which the pupil finds challenging
- Explain the best ways to communicate with the pupil
- In some cases, specify when increased physical contact with staff might be appropriate. These situations will be discussed with everyone involved and clearly written down in the plan.

11. Training and risk assessments

The trust will ensure that:

- Staff receive **appropriate, approved training** in restrictive interventions and de-escalation
- Training is **refreshed regularly**
- Compliance with training requirements is **centrally monitored by the trust**

Risk assessments must be in place for pupils where there is an increased likelihood of restrictive intervention.

12. Recording, Reporting and Escalation

12.1 Immediate Response and Internal Escalation

All incidents must be considered **through a safeguarding lens** and escalated where they meet safeguarding thresholds.

Following any incident, staff must:

- Ensure the **immediate safety and wellbeing** of all pupils and staff involved
- Seek medical attention if required
- Inform a **senior leader (or the headteacher)** as soon as possible, and always on the same day

For serious incidents, the headteacher must be notified **immediately**.

12.2 Recording Requirements

All incidents must be recorded **as soon as possible and on the same day**, using the trust's agreed safeguarding recording system.

Records must:

- Be **factual, clear and proportionate**
- Reflect the **voice of the pupil**, where appropriate
- Include all information required under statutory guidance (as set out in this policy)

In addition:

- Every record must be **reviewed and signed off by a senior leader**
- The headteacher must ensure that records are **quality assured regularly**
- Records must be stored securely in line with **data protection and safeguarding requirements**

12.3 Notification to Parents/Carers

Parents/carers must be informed **as soon as reasonably practicable**, and wherever possible on the same day.

Communication must:

- Be **clear, factual and sensitive**
- Explain:
    - What occurred
    - Why the intervention was necessary
    - The type of intervention used
    - Any injuries or follow-up actions

Where a decision is taken **not to inform parents/carers**, this must:

- Be based on a **clear safeguarding rationale**
- Be agreed by the **headteacher and DSL**
- Be recorded in writing

12.4 Escalation to Trust Leadership

The headteacher must notify the Trust of all serious incidents on the same day.

This includes incidents involving:

- Injury
- Potential excessive force
- Repeated use
- Vulnerable pupils
- Complaints, allegations or external agency involvement

A written summary must be provided where required.

Failure to escalate appropriately will be treated as a breach of safeguarding expectations.

12.5 Safeguarding Referrals and External Reporting

The headteacher and DSL must consider whether:

- A safeguarding referral is required
- The threshold for LADO involvement is met

All decisions must be:

- Prompt
- Clearly recorded
- Shared with the trust safeguarding lead

12.6 Monitoring, Review and Quality Assurance

At school level:

- All incidents must be reviewed to identify patterns and improvements

At trust level:

- Data will be monitored to identify:
    - Trends
    - Variations
    - Disproportionality

The trust may undertake audits or reviews where concerns arise.

13. Complaints and allegations

Complaints relating to restrictive interventions will be managed in accordance with:

- The trust complaints policy
- Academy-level procedures

Allegations against staff will be managed in line with KCSIE.

14. Monitoring and review

The Trust Board will review this policy annually and assure its effective implementation across all schools.

15. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Behaviour policy
- Safeguarding and child protection policy
- Complaints policy
- Health and safety policy
- SEND policy