

Restrictive Interventions, including Reasonable Force and Seclusion Policy (Senior)



CATERHAM
SCHOOL

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1. Policy Statement and Principles

Independent School Standards – Parts 3 and 8; Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026; EYFS Statutory Framework 2026

Caterham School is committed to ensuring the safety, dignity and wellbeing of all pupils and staff. Positive relationships, effective behaviour management, early support and de-escalation are used to reduce the likelihood that restrictive physical intervention will be required.

Restrictive physical intervention will only be used where it is lawful, reasonable, proportionate and necessary in the circumstances. It will never be used as a punishment.

Where reasonable force is necessary, staff will use no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time. Decisions will take account of the individual circumstances of the pupil, including their age and stage of development, SEND, disability, medical needs, communication needs and any relevant safeguarding considerations.

Particular regard will be given to the needs and developmental stage of younger pupils, including children in Reception.

The School does not operate a 'no contact' policy. Appropriate physical contact may be necessary to support, guide, protect or safeguard a pupil. The use of reasonable force is distinct from appropriate everyday physical contact.

This policy should be read alongside the:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- SEND Policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Complaints Policy);
- relevant individual pupil risk assessments, behaviour/support plans and healthcare plans.

2. Definitions

Independent School Standards – Part 3, paragraph 16A; Education and Inspections Act 2006

Reasonable force covers a range of actions involving a degree of physical contact to control or restrain a pupil. It may range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm to more restrictive intervention where necessary to prevent violence or injury.

Restrictive physical intervention is physical action which restricts a pupil's movement or liberty of action.

Restraint occurs where a member of staff restricts or immobilises a pupil's movement otherwise than as a disciplinary penalty. This may include holding a pupil's body or part of it. Restraint may also occur without direct physical contact, for example through depriving a pupil of an auxiliary aid they normally use to move.

Seclusion occurs where one or more members of staff detain one pupil in a place apart from others, otherwise than as a disciplinary penalty, including by physically preventing the

pupil from leaving, securing the place so that the pupil cannot leave, or causing the pupil to believe that they will be punished if they leave.

Restrictive physical intervention does not include appropriate physical contact such as comforting a distressed child, administering first aid, giving appropriate physical support during PE or activities, or guiding a pupil where the pupil is cooperating and their movement is not being restricted against their will.

3. Legal Framework and Authorised Staff

Education and Inspections Act 2006; Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

Members of staff may use reasonable force where they are legally entitled to do so and where it is reasonable and necessary in the circumstances.

The decision whether to use reasonable force is a matter of professional judgement and must depend on the individual circumstances. Staff are not expected to place themselves at unreasonable risk of injury. Where practicable, assistance should be sought from colleagues.

Pupils must never be asked or encouraged to assist in restraining another pupil.

All staff should understand this policy and know how to summon appropriate assistance in an emergency.

4. Preventing the Need for Restrictive Physical Intervention

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026; Equality Act 2010; EYFS Statutory Framework 2026

Restrictive physical intervention is a last resort. Wherever practicable, staff should seek to prevent and de-escalate situations before physical intervention becomes necessary.

Strategies may include:

- positive behaviour management and reinforcement;
- calm and clear communication;
- distraction or redirection;
- allowing appropriate time and space for a pupil to regulate;
- reducing environmental demands or sources of distress;
- identifying and responding to triggers and early warning signs;
- conflict resolution and restorative approaches, where appropriate;
- seeking assistance from another member of staff;
- using agreed strategies contained within an individual pupil plan.

Where a pupil is known to be at increased risk of behaviour which might result in restrictive physical intervention, the School will consider appropriate proactive planning. This may include an individual behaviour or support plan developed with parents and the pupil where appropriate.

Such planning should identify relevant triggers, early warning signs, preventative and de-escalation strategies, SEND, disability, medical or communication needs, reasonable adjustments and agreed approaches to maintaining safety.

5. When Reasonable Force May Be Used

Education and Inspections Act 2006; Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026; EYFS Statutory Framework 2026

Reasonable force may be used where it is necessary and proportionate to prevent a pupil from:

- causing injury to themselves or another person;
- committing an offence;
- causing serious damage to property; or
- seriously prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the School or during a School activity.

Staff should consider whether taking no action would result in a greater risk than intervening and whether alternative strategies could safely and reasonably be used.

Restrictive physical intervention should normally only be used when preventative and de-escalation strategies have been unsuccessful or where the immediacy and seriousness of the risk makes it impracticable to attempt them.

For children in Reception, physical intervention may be used to avert immediate danger of personal injury or to manage a child's behaviour where absolutely necessary.

Force must never be used simply to secure compliance where there is no lawful justification for doing so, nor as a punishment.

6. Using Restrictive Physical Intervention Safely

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026; DfE Restrictive Interventions Guidance

Any restrictive physical intervention must use no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time.

Where circumstances permit, staff should explain calmly to the pupil what is happening, why intervention is necessary and that the intervention will stop as soon as it is safe to do so.

Staff should, so far as reasonably practicable:

- summon assistance;
- remain calm and continue to communicate reassuringly with the pupil;
- use the minimum restriction necessary;
- minimise the risk of accidental injury;
- consider the pupil's individual needs and any known risk factors;
- monitor the pupil's breathing, circulation, physical condition and level of consciousness;
- cease the intervention as soon as it is no longer necessary.

Restrictive physical intervention must not:

- deliberately cause pain or injury;
- unnecessarily restrict breathing;
- involve pressure to the neck, throat, chest, joints or arterial pressure points;
- involve contact with sexually sensitive areas;
- involve pushing a pupil's arms up their back;
- involve straddling a pupil;
- use a face-down hold;
- continue for longer than necessary;
- be used as a disciplinary punishment.

The intervention must cease immediately if the pupil shows significant signs of physical distress, such as difficulty breathing, sudden change in colour, vomiting or altered consciousness, and appropriate medical assistance must be sought.

7. SEND, Disability, Medical Needs and Individual Planning

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026; Equality Act 2010; SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years

When considering or using reasonable force in relation to a pupil with SEND, a disability, mental health needs or a medical condition, staff must recognise that the pupil may be particularly vulnerable and that their behaviour or response to physical intervention may be affected by their individual needs.

Staff must consider any relevant reasonable adjustments, healthcare plans, risk assessments, communication needs and individual behaviour or support plans.

The existence of SEND, disability or a medical condition does not automatically prevent reasonable force being used where it is necessary to safeguard the pupil or others. However, known needs and risks must inform decisions about whether and how to intervene.

Where there is a foreseeable risk that restrictive physical intervention may be required, proactive planning should seek to reduce that risk and identify the safest and least restrictive approach.

8. After an Incident

Independent School Standards – Parts 3 and 8; Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026; EYFS Statutory Framework 2026

Following any restrictive physical intervention, the immediate physical and emotional wellbeing of the pupil will be considered.

The pupil should be given appropriate reassurance and an opportunity, when calm and developmentally able to do so, to explain their experience and views. For younger pupils, including children in Reception, this should be undertaken sensitively and in a developmentally appropriate manner.

The pupil should be checked for injury and medical attention provided where required. The wellbeing of staff and other pupils involved or witnessing the incident should also be considered.

The School will consider:

- whether further pastoral or medical support is required;
- whether there are safeguarding implications;
- what triggered the incident and whether it could have been prevented;
- whether an individual support plan or risk assessment should be created or amended;
- whether reasonable adjustments or environmental changes are required;
- what can be learned to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Any allegation or concern that a member of staff has used force inappropriately or excessively will be managed in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Staff Code of Conduct, including referral to the appropriate safeguarding procedures where required.

9. Recording and Reporting

Independent School Standards – paragraphs 16A and 32A; EYFS Statutory Framework 2026

All incidents of restraint or seclusion, and relevant incidents involving the use of reasonable force, will be recorded in writing as soon as practicable, ideally on the same day, including where the intervention formed part of an agreed individual behaviour or support plan.

The written record will include, as a minimum:

- the name of the pupil;
- the name(s) of staff involved;
- relevant pupil needs, including SEND, disability or medical needs where applicable;
- the date, time and location of the incident;
- the **duration** of the intervention;
- a brief account of what happened and the circumstances leading to the intervention;
- preventative or de-escalation strategies used, where applicable;
- why the intervention was considered necessary;
- the type and degree of force or restrictive intervention used;
- the pupil's response and outcome;
- details of any injuries to the pupil, staff or others and any damage to property;
- any medical treatment, pastoral support or other post-incident action;
- how and when parents were informed;
- any follow-up action or changes to plans or risk assessments.

The Senior Deputy Head or DSL must be informed as soon as practicable following an incident. Significant incidents will also be brought to the attention of the Headmaster as appropriate.

Parents will be informed of an incident as soon as practicable, ideally on the same day, and provided with appropriate information about what occurred.

Information must not be provided to a parent where doing so would be likely to result in significant harm to the pupil. Where it appears that there is no parent to whom the information could safely be provided, the School will provide the required information to the local authority in whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident.

Records will be reviewed by senior leaders to identify patterns, evaluate preventative measures and determine whether changes to practice, staff support, risk assessments or individual pupil plans are required.

10. Safeguarding and Complaints

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026; Independent School Standards – Parts 3 and 7

The use of restrictive physical intervention may give rise to a safeguarding concern. Where there is concern that an intervention may have been inappropriate, excessive or caused harm, the matter must be reported immediately in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Where an allegation concerns the conduct of a member of staff, the School will follow the relevant safeguarding procedures for managing allegations or concerns about adults working with children.

Parents who wish to make a complaint about the use of restrictive physical intervention should use the Complaints Policy.

The existence of a complaint does not prevent the School from taking any safeguarding action that is required.

11. Monitoring and Review

Independent School Standards – Parts 3 and 8

The Senior Deputy Head supported by the Assistant Head (Pastoral and Wellbeing) and Assistant Head (Boarding and Wellbeing) and other relevant senior leaders, will monitor the use of restrictive physical intervention within the School.

Records will be reviewed to identify patterns, including repeated interventions involving individual pupils, locations or circumstances, and to evaluate whether preventative and de-escalation strategies are effective.

This policy is reviewed annually and whenever there is a significant change to relevant legislation, statutory guidance or School practice.

The policy is published on the School website and is available in hard copy or an accessible format on request.