



Safe Touch, Restrictive Intervention including use of Reasonable Force

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Linked with other policies:

- Safeguarding including Child Protection
- Behaviour
- Exclusions
- Complaints

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "S. Day".

Version Control

Version	Date of review/change(s)	Page and paragraphs affected	Summary of update
New policy	February 2026		

Aims at All Saints School

We believe that children have the right to independence, choice and inclusion, and we seek to provide opportunities for personal growth and emotional health and wellbeing. Children learn who they are and how the world is by forming relationships with people and things around them. The quality of a child's relationship with significant adults is vital to their healthy development and emotional health and wellbeing.

Our policy considers the extensive neurobiological research and studies relating to attachment theory and child development that identify safe touch as a positive contribution to brain development, mental health and the development of social skills. At All Saints School, we have adopted an informed, evidence based decision to allow safe touch as a developmentally appropriate intervention that will aid healthy growth and learning as a part of a nurturing school ethos. Safe touch will only be used when appropriate and will take into account the individual needs and preferences of each student.

Different Types of Touch

There are five different types of touch and physical contact that may be used, these are:

1. Casual / Informal / Incidental Touch

Staff use touch with students as part of a normal relationship, for example, comforting a child, giving reassurance and congratulating, or for their safety. This might include putting an arm out to bar an exit from a room, taking a child by the hand, patting on the back or putting an arm around the shoulders. The benefit of this action is often proactive and can prevent a situation from escalating.

2. General Reparative Touch

This is used by staff working with children who are having difficulties with their emotions. Healthy emotional development requires safe touch as a means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a frightened, angry or sad child. Touch used to regulate a child's emotions triggers the release of the calming chemical oxytocin in the body. Reparative touch may include stroking a back or gently squeezing an arm.

3. Contact Play

This is used by staff adopting a role similar to a parent in a healthy child-parent relationship. This will only take place when the child has developed a trusting relationship with the adult and when they feel completely comfortable and at ease with this type of contact. Contact play may include an adult chasing and catching the child or an adult and child playing a game of building towers with their hands.

4. Interactive Play

This structured play follows clear rules and is operated under close supervision by staff. It will only ever take place when all participants are in agreement and completely understand the rules. This sort of play releases the following chemicals in the brain: Opioids - to calm and soothe and give pleasure; Dopamine - to focus, be alert and concentrate; BDNF (Brain Derived Neurotropic Factor) - a brain 'fertiliser' that encourages growth. Interactive play may include throwing cushions to each other or using soft foam bats to 'fence' each other.

5. Positive Handling (Calming a Dysregulated Child)

Trained staff will move or restrain a child when:

- Behaviour is unacceptably threatening, dangerous, aggressive or out of control;
- In order to avoid harm to self or others or damage to property;
- To avoid an offence being committed and / or a breakdown of good order and discipline.

For clarity, this guidance will use the following definitions:

- **Restrictive intervention:** a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a student. This policy 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. For example, holding a student's arms to their sides or removing a student's crutches would both be considered forms of restraint. This will always be a last resort and using techniques taught as part of the Norfolk Steps Training (Step Up). Only staff trained in these techniques would implement them.

Steps to Take Before Positive Handling

Prevention strategies and calming measures will be employed and the following action should be taken before a restraint is used.

- Conversation, distraction, coaxing skills, gentle persuasion or redirection to other activities (e.g. touching the child's arm and leading him / her away from danger, gently stroking the child's shoulder);
- Encourage the child to help him/herself feel more secure by wrapping a blanket tightly around him/herself or holding on tightly to a large cushion or stuffed toy;
- Put distance between the child and others - move others to a safer place;
- Calmly remove anything that could be used as a weapon, including hot drinks, objects, furniture
- To prevent a child continuing to pose harm in a dangerous situation, advise others to leave, but remain with the child yourself;
- Keep talking calmly to the child, explain what is happening and why, how it can stop, and what will happen next;
- Use first aid procedures in the event of injury or physical distress when safe to do so.

Who Can Use Positive Handling?

Staff using positive handling techniques will have been fully trained in the Norfolk Step On and Step Up techniques.

There are some situations where those without training might find it reasonable to use a degree of force. Everyone has the right to defend themselves against an attack provided they do not use a disproportionate degree of force to do so. In an emergency, for example, if a child was in immediate risk of injury or on the point of inflicting injury on someone else, any member of staff would be entitled to intervene.

Use of Reasonable Force and Physical Restraint

The DFE guidance (2026) on 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools' states that:

All members of staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances, to prevent or stop a student from:

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

This power applies to any member of staff at the school. It can also apply to people whom the Headteacher has temporarily put in charge of students such as unpaid volunteers or parents and carers accompanying students on a school visit.

All Saints School's approach to physical restraint

We aim to avoid the need for physical intervention and regard this as a last resort in a minority of situations. We always aim to deal with behaviour using a positive approach and therefore this policy should be read in connection with our Behaviour and Reward policies.

Physical restraint is applied as an act of care and control with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the student to regain self-control. It never takes a form which could be seen as punishment.

Staff are only authorised to use reasonable force in applying physical restraint i.e. only applying force necessary to stop or prevent danger should be used, in accordance with the guidelines below. In all circumstances, alternative methods are used as appropriate with physical intervention or restraint as a last resort.

When physical restraint becomes necessary and ALL other approaches have been tried:

DO

- Tell the student what you are doing and why
- Tell the student what s/he/they must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition)
- Use simple and clear language
- Use the minimum force necessary
- Relax your restraint in response to the student's compliance
- Hold limbs above a major joint if possible e.g. above the elbow

DON'T

- Manage on your own – request support using the walkie-talkie or call for help
- Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the student
- Stop talking even if the student doesn't respond
- Involve other students
- Use physical intervention

Actions after an incident

Physical restraint often occurs in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for the staff involved and the student. **The Headteacher or Operations Manager 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 staff should always be involved in debriefing the student involved and any victims of the incident should be offered support, and their parents or carers contacted to inform them of the actions that were taken and why, and to provide them with an opportunity to discuss the incident. Parent / Carer views should be entered onto the CPOMs (Child Protection Online Management System) incident form using the 'restraint' category.

Student and staff support

All Saints 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 students and staff, any patterns and trends, and how the use of restrictive interventions might be avoided in future, for example by amending the positive behaviour support plan.

If appropriate, the student 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 student must be recorded as described in 'Recording and reporting duties' in this document. In addition, any injuries should be recorded in accordance with the school's procedures and reported as appropriate to the Health and Safety Executive.

A follow-up conversation(s) to facilitate reflection, learning and to support student and staff wellbeing will take place as soon as possible after the event when all involved are able to do so. This conversation should be framed as part of the overall debriefing process and look to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from both the staff and students involved, as well as to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue. This process will 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. As a school we will continue to monitor student and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed, for example through further follow-up conversations, counselling or other resources. Additionally, any student who witnesses an incident of restrictive intervention where a peer may have been injured or become distressed should also be provided with appropriate support where necessary.

Recording and reporting duties

Recording the use of force (statutory guidance)

As an Independent school we must ensure that a procedure is in place for recording each significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a student, as part of the school's

duty under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Incidents 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.

All behaviour incidents, where restraint is needed, are to be recorded on the electronic CPOMS recording system. This should be completed immediately after the incident.

Information to be included, all of which is incorporated into the restraint category:

- Name of student and staff involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the student
- Who is reporting the incident
- Date, time and location of the incident
- Clear recording of timeline, including for how long each stage involved
- Names of other witnesses
- What de-escalation techniques were used prior to physical controls
- 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
- Brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance
- Any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts
- If a restrictive physical intervention was used, what technique was used and when and by whom
- Student views following the incident
- What parent's / carer's views were when they were informed
- What action has been taken and has the behaviour management plan been updated or risk assessment created
- If the Police were involved
- If there has been internal or external exclusion. FTEX (Fixed Term Exclusion) or PEX (end of placement)
- What post incident support was given to the member(s) of staff involved
- If an individual risk assessment is required following the incident
- If the incident was resolved and if not what the next steps are to be.

On CPOMS this will be signed and date stamped and will be sufficient evidence, meaning an additional 'bound book' will not be required. In the event of any future complaint or allegation this record provides essential and accurate information.

Reporting the use of force (statutory guidance)

The school Director(s) must ensure that a procedure is in place for reporting each significant use of force to the parents/carers of the student involved as soon as practicable after the incident, and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

Exceptions to the requirement to report are where:

- it appears to the staff member that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the student. In this instance, the staff member must 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 within

whose area the student is ordinarily resident. 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 student's positive behaviour support plan.

All Saints School will communicate this information to parents in writing. For example, via email. Best practice would include inviting parents to have a follow-up discussion about the incident where appropriate. This could involve a discussion about:

- any behavioural triggers or warning signs of an impending incident
- 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.

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

As an Independent school we must ensure that a procedure is in place for recording each seclusion or restraint incident as part of the school's duty under the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025. As outlined in these regulations, 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 under the procedures outlined in this section. Incidents 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. The procedure must require that a record of any such incident is made in writing as soon as practicable after the incident. The requirement to record applies even if the use of seclusion or restraint in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a student's behaviour support plan. Schools should record the following details as a minimum:

- names of student and staff directly involved
- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- any relevant needs or circumstances of the student, including whether the student involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN
- status code
- a brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
- details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or
- other adverse impacts

Independent schools and non-maintained special schools must ensure there is a procedure for providing information about the seclusion or restraint incident in writing to parents.

Parents must be informed as soon as practicable after the incident and schools should

endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

Exceptions to the requirement to report are where:

- it appears to the staff member that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the student. In this instance, the staff member must 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 within whose area the student is ordinarily resident.

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

Best practice would include inviting parents to have a follow-up discussion about the incident where appropriate. This could involve a discussion about:

- any behavioural triggers or warning signs of an impending incident
- 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. In circumstances where a restraint incident also constitutes a significant use of force, schools only need to follow the reporting procedure for significant use of force incidents under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 as outlined above. The same information does not need to be reported twice. However, if a restraint incident does not constitute a significant incident of use of force, for example, the removal of a walking aid, this must be reported under the procedures outlined in this section.

Risk Assessments added to Positive Behaviour Management Plans

If the behaviour is part of an ongoing pattern it will be necessary to address the situation through the development or review of a report card which may include a risk assessment, an anger management programme and possible involvement of the school counsellor or other external agencies.

If we become aware that a student is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, we will plan how to respond if the situation arises.

- Strategies to be used prior to intervention
- Ways of avoiding 'triggers' if these are known
- Involvement of parents and carers to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might need to take
- Briefing of staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking
- Identification of additional support that can be summoned if appropriate
- The school's duty of care to all students and staff.

Use of reasonable force to search students

Head teachers and staff they authorise have a statutory power to search a student or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the student 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 only.

Staff should refer to the [Searching, Screening and Confiscation in schools guidance](#) document for detailed advice on searching a student.

Unacceptable uses of force

It is illegal to use force on a student for the purpose of punishment. Students 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 student 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 student 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 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 each situation, the member of staff should use their judgement and have regard to:

- the school's 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

Seclusion

Seclusion - a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a student 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 student is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. In such circumstances, the student is not acting with intent. Seclusion should not be implemented by staff through threat of punishment. The place to which the student is confined should be safe and not feel threatening or intimidating to the student. The student should be always supervised during the period of seclusion. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the student should be allowed to

leave. An incident involving the use of seclusion must be recorded and reported in accordance with the procedures outlined in the section on 'Recording and reporting duties'.

Seclusion, as defined in this document, is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. There are disciplinary measures that are similar, such as removal from the classroom.

Complaints and allegations

This clear physical intervention and restraint policy, adhered to by all staff and shared with parents and carers, should help to avoid complaints from parents and carers. It is unlikely to prevent all complaints, however, and a dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation under our Complaints Procedure which can be found on the school website www.allsaintslessingham.co.uk