

# *Policy on the Use of Reasonable Force and Other Restrictive Interventions*

*September 2025*



Date of previous review	September 2024
Review frequency	Annually
Date of next review	September 2026

*The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff to share this commitment.*

## 1. Objectives

- To maintain the safety of students and staff
- To prevent serious breaches of school discipline
- To prevent serious damage to property
- To provide clarification on the use of force and other restrictive interventions to help school staff feel more confident about using this power when they feel it is necessary

### Key points

- Staff have a power and lawful use of 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
- SLT will support those who use reasonable force with the correct intention and objective

This policy has been written in strict accordance with the DfE policy “Use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions guidance” February 2025. The link is below:

*Link = [DfE Use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions guidance February 2025](#)*

### Statement of intent

We take our duty of care very seriously. We want student to come to school and feel safe and respected. We place our trust in them to do the right thing and we provide educational opportunities to help them make informed decisions. We fully support and actively participate in the principles behind being a trauma ready school. We never want our actions to add to the trauma that some students experience in their daily lives. We also acknowledge that a student's expectation of privacy increases as they get older. However, we also understand that students can make poor choices at times and that we must protect our school community. We will intervene through reasonable force and restrictive intervention to prevent students hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or causing disorder. This decision will never be taken lightly and there will always be reasonable grounds for the intervention. We are committed to de-escalation wherever possible. This is in line with Section 93 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006.

All staff must do everything possible to avoid any form of physical intervention. Techniques can include using your voice, trying to calm the student and offering a way out. It is always the last possible option to step in and apply a reasonable force technique. Students in our school buy into the culture that we create and they embrace the routines that we have.

Every incident of reasonable force must be recorded in a bound book that is kept in the Student Services Department.

We have a full duty team during every break and lunch. They wear high visibility jackets so students can easily identify them. A member of the Senior Leadership Team will also be available during every break. Radio contact is critical. This allows staff to get to key situations quickly with a basic level of information.

## 2. What force is reasonable?

**Reasonable force = using no more force than is needed for the least amount of time**

- 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 when a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence.
- Examples of **control** include standing between students, blocking a student's path or physical contact such as leading a student by the arm.

- Examples of **restraint** include to hold back physically or to bring a student under control using direct physical contact and force where the intention is to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a student.

School staff will 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 a student.

The following techniques should never be used because they present an unacceptable risk:

- The seated double embrace
- The double basket-hold
- The nose distraction technique

**NOTE: It is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.**

## What is restrictive practice?

This involves any planned or reactive action which limits a student's movement, liberty or freedom to act independently.

Examples of such practice may include the use of equipment, medication or seclusion. Restrictive interventions may or may not involve the use of reasonable force.

As noted within the definitions, these terms (restraint, restrictive practice and reasonable force) are not necessarily mutually exclusive categories. For example, depending on the circumstances, if two members of staff briefly physically pull apart two students who are fighting, all three definitions could be relevant.

The Jo Richardson Community School will always act in a child first way and will only ever supply medication as directed by a medical professional in conjunction with parents.

## 3. When should force be used?

The following is not an exhaustive list, but it does provide some good examples:

- remove disruptive students from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so
- prevent a student behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or trip
- prevent a student leaving the classroom where allowing them to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others
- prevent a student from attacking a member of staff or another student, or to stop a fight
- restrain a student at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts
- prevent a student from causing significant damage to themselves or school property

In assessing whether force and / or other restrictive interventions are reasonable in a situation, the member of staff should use their professional judgement.

The following factors may help with the decision making:

### 1 - Is it necessary or is there a reasonable alternative?

Are any staff available who have a link with the student?

Is there a context around the student?

### 2 – Is it proportionate?

Does the student have any additional needs or factors to take into account?

Have any relevant equality implications been considered under the Equalities Act 2010?

### 3 - Have you considered the student's welfare?

Have you considered the impact on the student's overall welfare, balanced against any action taken?

Have you done everything possible to maintain respect for a student's dignity?

Depending on the circumstances, examples of strategies to reduce the need for intervention may include:

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

### **Advice for staff**

- Stay calm and keep repeating the request in a quiet voice. Try to de-escalate the situation. It may take several requests for the student to hear you if they have lost control. Try to gain eye contact with them and remind the student that you are there to help. You are a safe person and you want to help them
- Ensure that another adult witness is with you at all times. However, if this is not possible, immediately send a student for an appropriate adult to support you
- Remember: physical restraint is a last resort and try to ensure another adult is available if the situation requires it
- Never get involved physically with a child when you are angry – hand over to someone else
- Force that should **NOT** be used includes holding round the neck, kicking, slapping or punching, forcing limbs against joints, tripping or holding by hair or ear, holding face down on the ground
- Any form of force or restraint that is likely to injure a student should only be used in extreme emergencies and where there is no viable alternative

### **Students with SEN or Disabilities**

**Reasonable adjustments will always be made for students with a disability or SEN. They will have a detailed care plan and risk assessment (if required).**

- The Director of Student Development Department (SDD) is directly involved in reviewing the needs and management programme of students with SEN and SEMH needs. An individual risk assessment is drawn up where it is known that force is more likely to be used to restrain a particular student, such as with a student with SEN or poor behaviour. This gives clear guidance on 'positive handling plans' and takes into account issues identified on a student's statement/EHCP. Staff coming into contact with such vulnerable students need to be made aware of situations that may provoke difficult behaviour, preventative strategies and what de-escalation strategies are likely to work.
- Parents are made aware that such a risk assessment is in place for their child and the school seeks express written consent from the parent to inform staff about their child and acknowledging that physical restraint may at times be necessary.
- Students experiencing difficulties should also be given guidance/strategies to cope when faced with times of crisis.
- Each student will have a detailed profile that is shared with staff. This will explain the triggers, the plan in place and all trusted adults.
- Parents/carers will always be central to any plan that is made about their child. The plans will be reviewed on a regular basis.

In addition to the general power to use reasonable force and/or restrictive practice described above, headteachers and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for the following prohibited items:

- Knives or weapons;
- Alcohol;
- Illegal drugs (including vapes);
- Stolen items;
- Tobacco and cigarette papers;
- Fireworks;
- Pornographic images;
- Any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to:
  - Commit an offence;

- Cause personal injury or damage to property.

Force cannot be used to search for items banned under school rules which do not come under the heading of prohibited items.

Please refer to the Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy for more details.

## 4. Who can use reasonable force?

The decision on whether to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned. It will be on a case-by-case basis.

There is a power, not a duty, to use force. However, teachers and other school staff have a duty of care towards their students and it might be argued that failing to take action may in some circumstances breach that duty. This is in line with health and safety responsibilities and duties for schools.

- All members of staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances
- 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 accompanying students on an organised school visit
- If staff are more likely to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions, we will make every effort to ensure they are adequately trained in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies. This is to ensure the wellbeing and safety of all those involved

### Deciding whether to use reasonable force

Staff should only use force when:

- the potential consequences of not intervening are sufficiently serious to justify considering use of force
- the chance of achieving the desired result by other means are low
- the risk associated with not using force outweigh those of using force

Staff in charge of students must ensure that clear guidance is given to volunteer helpers working with students who present particular risks to themselves or others, such as those with SEND or severe behavioural difficulties.

### Training

The Headteacher will decide about what training is required and who should attend it. They will follow LA guidance.

### Communicating the school's approach to the use of force

This is done through the Behaviour Management Policy and this policy. The Jo Richardson Community School does not require parental consent to use force on a student but makes policies available to parents via the website or on request.

## 5. Things to do after reasonable force has been used

Every situation where reasonable force and/or restrictive practice has been used will be logged in the school's bound book which is held centrally in the Student Services Department. The incident will also be recorded using Bromcom. SLT MUST be informed.

Parents, as soon as is practicable, are told when and where the incident took place, why force was used, what force was used, whether there were any injuries and what follow up action (support and/or disciplinary) was being taken in relation to their child. If reporting the incident to a parent may result in significant harm to the child, then the DSL must be informed.

If a child is subject to a care order, the Local Authority is also informed. If appropriate, other external agencies are informed such as the Safeguarding LA Officer, the Health and Safety Executive, etc.

The record forms part of the student's educational record.

### **Post incident support**

Care is taken after an incident to ensure both staff and students are supported, including meeting immediate medical needs, rebuilding relationships and reflecting on the incident so lessons can be learned.

### **Child first principles**

Following the invitation and subsequent recommendations of the child Q report, JRCS follows a child first approach. We will always challenge all professionals who fail to consider the impact of their actions on children.

Following each significant incident involving the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive intervention, schools should evaluate the incident to understand why reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions were used, the impact on students and staff, any patterns and trends, and how the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions might be avoided in future, for example, by amending or introducing a behaviour support plan.

The review of the incident should be conducted by a member of staff who was not involved in the original incident, with a focus on repair and rebuild.

Looking at past data, the use of reasonable force and or restrictive practice is rare in Jo Richardson. Students follow staff instructions and behave in a respectful way towards each other. However, there may be rare occasions where we class an event as significant. If a significant event occurs, both the staff and student involved should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. Any injuries should be recorded in accordance with school procedures and reported as appropriate to the Health and Safety Executive.

## **6. Dealing with complaints**

- All complaints about the use of force should be thoroughly, speedily and appropriately investigated using the school's usual complaint procedure
- Where a member of staff has acted within the law this will provide a defence to any criminal prosecution or other civil or public law action
- When a complaint is made, the onus is on the person making the complaint to prove that his/her allegations are true - it is not for the member of staff to show that he/she has acted reasonably
- Suspension must not be an automatic response

## **7. What about other physical contact with students?**

Schools have been advised not to have a 'no contact' policy.

Additionally, schools should not grant any requests by parents or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions. The adoption of a 'no contact' policy at a school can leave staff unable to intervene where reasonable in the circumstances to fully protect 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 circumstances, but examples of occasions when physical contact is generally appropriate include:

- to give first aid

- to guide or escort students, eg, 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, eg, 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, have regard to the school's safeguarding (or any other relevant) policy, the applicable circumstances (eg, whether there are other adults present), the individual student's age, and any other material factors, including but not limited to, whether the student has SEND or other vulnerabilities, or whether any alternative strategies which do not include physical contact can be used.

## 8. What is unacceptable force?

Staff should never use force as a punishment. Students should not be deliberately restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation, for example, by covering their mouth or applying pressure to the throat or neck.

The use of force can be dangerous and staff should do everything they can to release their hold as soon as they can.

## 9. A key summary

Recording the use of force in writing is a statutory requirement. It is much more than guidance.

We always want to apply a best practice approach. Here is the level of information that is needed when recording the use of force:

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

This information will be stored in the bound book which is kept in Student Services. Year teams and/or the senior member of staff investigating will also make a note of the following:

- how the information was communicated with parents and did they request a follow up meeting
- a review of the case and any triggers identified
- a summary of the proactive behaviour plan produced / amended
- what restorative work was completed with the member of staff

The use of force and restrictive practice will be monitored and reviewed under the Equalities Act 2010.

*This document should be read in conjunction with the school's Behaviour Management and Anti-Bullying Policies, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and DfE guidance.*