Hednesford Hills Federation

Restrictive Interventions, Including the Use of Reasonable Force, Policy

Policy owner	Headteacher
Approved by	Governing Body
Approval date	7.10.26
Review date	September 2027, or earlier if guidance changes
Applies to	West Hill Primary School, including Pre-School provision
Key guidance	DfE: Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026)

1. Purpose and scope

Hednesford Hills Federation is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and respectful environment in which pupils and staff are protected from harm. This policy sets out the school's approach to restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, restraint and seclusion, and applies to all staff, pupils, governors, volunteers and others acting on behalf of the school, including within the Nursery and Pre-School provision.

The federation's starting point is prevention. Positive relationships, early support, reasonable adjustments, effective behaviour support and de-escalation will be used to minimise the need for restrictive intervention. Any intervention must be lawful, necessary, proportionate, reasonable in the circumstances, and use the least restriction or force for the shortest possible time.

2. Legal and statutory framework

This policy has been developed with regard to the Department for Education guidance Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026). It reflects relevant duties under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (including sections 93 and 93A), the Education Act 1996, the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025, the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010, alongside current safeguarding guidance.

The statutory recording and reporting requirements effective from April 2026 are incorporated into this policy.

3. Core principles

- Restrictive interventions are a last-resort safety response; prevention and de-escalation are prioritised.
- The pupil's welfare, dignity, rights and individual needs remain central throughout.
- The least restrictive option and minimum force necessary will be used for the shortest possible period.
- Force will never be used as punishment.
- Reasonable adjustments will be made for pupils with SEND, disability, sensory or communication needs, trauma histories and other vulnerabilities.
- Parents/carers are partners in planning and will be informed following incidents in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Incidents will be recorded, reviewed and analysed so that practice continually improves and disproportionate patterns can be identified.

4. Definitions

Restrictive intervention: a physical or non-physical action used to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of a pupil's body or part of their body.

Reasonable force: physical intervention using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time required in the circumstances.

Significant incident: an incident where use of force goes beyond appropriate everyday physical contact between pupils and staff, including where physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

Restraint: a non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises a pupil or limits movement, with or without direct physical contact.

Seclusion: a non-disciplinary intervention in which a pupil is confined away from others and prevented from leaving through physical obstruction, blocking, or the belief that they will be punished if they leave.

Appropriate physical contact: ordinary appropriate contact that does not amount to reasonable force, for example first aid, guiding a pupil, comforting a distressed child or demonstrating a technique in PE or music.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Governing Body

- Ensure that the school has clear procedures for recording and reporting significant use of force, seclusion and restraint.
- Ensure appropriate resources are available for training, recording systems and pupil/staff support.
- Receive anonymised or appropriately aggregated information at least termly, with serious matters escalated sooner where appropriate.
- Review data to identify patterns, repeat incidents, training needs, effectiveness of support and any disproportionate use affecting pupils with SEND, protected characteristics or other vulnerabilities.
- Take reasonable steps to ensure that the procedures in this policy are followed.

Headteacher and senior leadership

- The Headteacher has overall responsibility for implementation and monitoring. Day-to-day oversight is supported by the Deputy Headteacher, DSL/DDSL and SENDCo according to the circumstances and pupil needs.
- Ensure significant incidents are brought to the Headteacher or appropriate senior leader as soon as possible.
- Ensure appropriate staff training, risk assessment, reasonable adjustments and preventative support are in place.
- Review incident trends and use findings to inform individual plans, staff development and wider school practice.
- Ensure required parent/carer notification and governance reporting takes place.

DSL / DDSL

- Consider and manage any safeguarding implications arising from an incident.
- Ensure safeguarding concerns are recorded on MyConcern and referrals are made where required.
- Support liaison with pupils, families and relevant agencies where safeguarding concerns are identified.

All staff

- Use prevention, de-escalation and positive behaviour strategies.
- Use restrictive intervention only where lawful, necessary and proportionate, taking account of the pupil's welfare and individual circumstances.
- Seek trained assistance where safe and practicable, without delaying necessary action in an emergency.
- Report and record incidents promptly and fully and participate in post-incident reflection.

6. Who may use reasonable force and staff training

All members of federation staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances. Hednesford Hills Federation does not limit this legal power to particular job titles. In an immediate emergency, any member of staff may use reasonable force where it is necessary and proportionate to prevent injury, a criminal offence, damage to property or disorder.

Where restrictive intervention is foreseeable, the school expects appropriately trained staff to lead or support intervention wherever circumstances allow. This will include identified members of SLT, pastoral/inclusion staff and selected teaching and support staff who regularly work with pupils whose individual risk assessments identify an increased likelihood that intervention may be required.

The Headteacher will determine practical physical-intervention training needs in response to pupil need, risk assessments and incident trends. All staff will receive awareness of this policy, the legal framework, prevention and de-escalation. Training for identified staff will include safe and lawful practice, communication, dynamic risk assessment, necessity and proportionality, SEND/equality considerations, risks associated with restraint, recording/reporting and post-incident support. Training and refresher records will be maintained.

7. Prevention and de-escalation

Hednesford Hills Federation will seek to reduce restrictive intervention through a whole-school culture based on Respect, Learn, Achieve. Consistent expectations, trusting relationships, calm communication, effective classroom organisation, safe communal spaces, early identification of need and appropriate wellbeing support are central to this approach.

Staff should use strategies appropriate to the pupil and situation, which may include:

- giving time and space to regulate;
- reducing demands, noise or other sensory stimuli;
- adapting tone, facial expression and body language;
- using visual support, simplified language or non-verbal communication;
- offering familiar regulating activities, distraction or redirection;
- planned movement or regulation breaks;
- involving a familiar adult who knows the pupil well;
- changing routines or the environment where this is a reasonable adjustment.

8. SEND, disability, trauma, sensory and communication needs

Individual needs will be identified through risk assessments, behaviour support plans, SEND plans/EHCPs and discussion with pupils, parents/carers and relevant professionals. Staff will seek to understand underlying triggers such as pain, sensory overload, anxiety, communication difficulty, unfamiliar situations or previous adverse experiences.

For pupils with speech, language and communication needs or EAL, staff will adapt verbal and non-verbal communication, use simple and concrete language or visual supports where helpful, and allow sufficient processing time. Known triggers and successful strategies will be shared with staff who need the information.

Where restrictive intervention is foreseeable, the federsation will work with the pupil and parents/carers to develop or review a behaviour support plan and risk assessment. Plans will describe preventative strategies, communication needs, environmental adjustments, known triggers and, where relevant, circumstances in which increased physical contact may be appropriate. A plan does not automatically justify intervention: each use must still be necessary and proportionate in the circumstances.

9. When reasonable force may be used

Reasonable force may be used to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- causing injury to themselves or another person;
- committing a criminal offence;
- damaging property;
- causing disorder among pupils at school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

The decision rests with the member of staff responding to the situation. Where time permits, staff should consider less restrictive alternatives and seek assistance. Staff are not expected to delay necessary action where there is an immediate risk of harm.

Decision-making test

- Is it necessary? Are there safer or more effective less-restrictive options?
- Is it proportionate? Am I using the least restriction or force for the shortest time?
- Will it reduce the risk, or is it escalating the situation?
- Have I considered medical conditions, SEND, trauma, sensory needs, communication, age, size, dignity and equality implications?
- Can I clearly and calmly explain what is happening and what the pupil needs to do?
- Can the intervention be reduced or stopped now?

10. Unacceptable uses of force and safety

Force must never be used as punishment.

Pupils must not be restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation. Staff must not cover the mouth or nose or apply pressure to the neck or abdomen. Ground restraint carries particular risk and should be avoided. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release or reposition into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.

Any intervention that increases risk, distress or escalation should be reconsidered immediately where circumstances allow. Medical assessment or treatment will be arranged promptly where appropriate.

11. Seclusion

Seclusion must not be used as punishment or as a disciplinary sanction. It should only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation.

Any place used must be safe and must not feel threatening or intimidating. The pupil must be supervised at all times and allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced. Every incident of seclusion must be recorded and reported in accordance with section 15.

12. Appropriate physical contact

Hednesford Hills Federation does not operate a “no contact” policy. Appropriate physical contact is an important part of caring for, teaching and safeguarding children. Examples include first aid, guiding or escorting a pupil, holding a young child’s hand when moving around school, comforting a distressed pupil, congratulating or praising a pupil, and demonstrating techniques in PE, sport or music.

Staff should exercise professional judgement, taking account of safeguarding expectations, the circumstances, the pupil’s age, SEND or vulnerabilities, and whether a non-contact alternative is appropriate.

13. Searching pupils

The Headteacher and staff authorised by the Headteacher have statutory powers to search pupils or possessions in specified circumstances. Reasonable force may be used where legally permitted to search for legally prohibited items, but not solely to search for an item banned under school rules. Staff must follow current DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance and the school's procedures.

14. Early Years and Pre-School considerations

The same legal, safeguarding and welfare principles apply within West Hill's Pre-School provision and Hednesford Nursery School, adapted to the child's age and stage of development. Prevention should place particular emphasis on environment, predictable routines, close supervision, appropriate staffing and early recognition of distress.

Communication after an incident will be developmentally appropriate and may use simple language, pictures, emotion scales, drawing, play-based approaches, choices or support from a familiar adult. Restrictive intervention remains a safety response and must be necessary and proportionate.

15. Recording and reporting

Significant use of force

Every significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable. The member(s) of staff involved should endeavour to complete the record no later than the same day.

The record will include, as a minimum:

- names of the pupil and staff directly involved;
- relevant pupil needs or circumstances, including SEND and SEN status;
- date, time, location and approximate duration;
- what led to the incident, including known or potential triggers;
- preventative and de-escalation strategies used;
- the type and degree of force used;
- why the intervention was assessed as necessary;
- any injuries or adverse impact;
- post-incident support, first aid or medical treatment.
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Parents/carers must be informed of each significant use of force as soon as practicable, with the school endeavouring to do so no later than the same day. Initial contact will normally be made by the Headteacher, a member of SLT or another appropriate member of staff, followed by the required information in writing. The written information will include the time, date, location and approximate duration, why intervention was necessary, the type and degree of force used and any physical injuries.

Seclusion and non-force restraint

Every incident of seclusion or non-force restraint must also be recorded in writing as soon as practicable, normally no later than the same day. As a maintained school, West Hill will supply parents/carers with a copy of the written record and inform them as soon as practicable, endeavouring to do so no later than the same day.

Where a restraint incident also constitutes a significant use of force, the information does not need to be reported twice; the significant-use-of-force reporting procedure will be followed.

Where reporting to a parent would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil, the school will follow the statutory exception and reporting route.

16. Hednesford Hills Federation recording and storage procedure

The member(s) of staff directly involved will inform the Headteacher or a member of SLT as soon as possible. The school's Restrictive Intervention Incident Record will be completed before the end of the day wherever practicable.

Where an incident has safeguarding relevance, it will also be recorded and managed through the school's safeguarding procedures and MyConcern. Injuries will additionally be recorded through the school's accident/health and safety procedures and reported externally where required.

Records will be stored securely with access limited to staff with a legitimate need to know. Retention will follow the school's adopted Data Protection/Records Management and Retention Policy and records-management schedule.

17. Post-incident support, pupil voice and review

The immediate physical and emotional wellbeing of pupils and staff will be checked after an incident. First aid or medical assessment will be arranged where necessary.

Pupils will be given an opportunity to express their experience once they are calm and emotionally ready. A trusted member of staff, preferably someone not directly involved, will support the pupil to reflect on what happened, how they felt, possible triggers and what helped or did not help. The discussion will be supportive rather than punitive.

For younger pupils or those with communication needs, staff may use simple language, visual prompts, pictures, symbols, emotion scales, drawing, choice-based questions, non-verbal communication or a familiar adult. Pupils will be given sufficient processing time and will not be pressured to provide an immediate verbal account.

Staff involved will receive an initial wellbeing check and opportunity to debrief with the Headteacher or an appropriate senior leader, ideally someone not directly involved. The debrief is primarily for welfare, reflection and learning and is not automatically a disciplinary process. Further support may include follow-up meetings, the school's wellbeing arrangements, Occupational Health or other appropriate professional support.

Following significant or repeated incidents, the Headteacher/SLT, SENDCo and DSL/DDSL, as appropriate, will review whether safeguarding action, external professional advice, changes to behaviour support plans, risk assessments, reasonable adjustments, staffing or training are required. Where appropriate, restorative work will support relationship repair.

18. Parent/carer partnership

Where a pupil is identified as being at increased risk of requiring restrictive intervention, West Hill will work collaboratively with parents/carers, the pupil and relevant professionals to develop and review behaviour support plans and associated risk assessments. Parents/carers will be encouraged to share known triggers, communication and sensory needs, successful calming strategies and approaches that may increase distress.

Plans will be reviewed periodically and following any significant incident. Parental agreement to a plan does not remove the requirement to record and report an incident and does not automatically justify an intervention.

19. Monitoring, analysis and governance oversight

The Headteacher will regularly review incident records to identify repeat incidents, common triggers, locations or times, effectiveness of de-escalation, staff development needs and any disproportionate use involving pupils with SEND, protected characteristics or other vulnerabilities.

Anonymised or appropriately aggregated information will be reported to the Governing Body at least termly and considered at federation leadership level. Serious matters will be escalated sooner where appropriate. Small datasets will be interpreted cautiously to avoid inappropriate inference about individuals or small groups.

Learning from incidents will inform behaviour practice, safeguarding, SEND provision, risk assessment, staff training and school improvement.

20. Complaints and allegations

Complaints about restrictive interventions will be considered under the school's Complaints Policy. Where an allegation is made that a member of staff has used force or another restrictive intervention inappropriately, the school will follow Keeping Children Safe in Education and its safeguarding/managing allegations procedures. Safeguarding concerns will be referred to the appropriate agencies where required.

21. Links with other policies

This policy should be read alongside the Behaviour Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, SEND Policy and Information Report, Health and Safety Policy, Searching/Screening/Confiscation procedures, Complaints Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Data Protection/Records Management and Retention Policy, and relevant individual behaviour support plans and risk assessments.

22. Review and continuous improvement

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner following relevant legislative or statutory guidance changes, a serious incident that identifies a procedural weakness, or significant changes in the school context. Staff, pupil and parent/carer experience and governor scrutiny will inform review where appropriate.

Appendix 1: Restrictive Intervention Incident Record – minimum information

- Pupil name, class/year group and SEN status
- Staff directly involved and their roles
- Date, time, location and approximate duration
- Relevant needs/circumstances, including SEND, medical, sensory or communication needs
- Antecedents, known/potential triggers and events immediately before the incident
- Prevention and de-escalation strategies attempted
- Type of restrictive intervention/force used and degree of force
- Why the intervention was assessed as necessary and proportionate
- Any injury or adverse impact to pupil, staff or others
- First aid, medical assessment or treatment provided
- Pupil account/reflection when appropriate and emotionally ready
- Staff account and witness accounts where appropriate
- Post-incident support and debrief
- Parent/carer informed: date, time, method and by whom
- Written information/copy of record supplied where required
- Safeguarding/MyConcern and accident/health and safety records completed where applicable
- Follow-up actions and review of behaviour support plan/risk assessment
- Senior leader review/sign-off
- All this is available in an editable form to be completed after a reported incident.

Appendix 2: Quick staff decision and response guide

1. Identify the risk: is there an immediate or developing risk of injury, criminal offence, property damage or disorder?

2. Use prevention first where safe: communication, time, space, environmental change, distraction, regulation support or a familiar adult.
3. If intervention is necessary, use the least restrictive option and minimum force for the shortest time.
4. Communicate calmly, protect dignity and continually reassess whether intervention remains necessary.
5. Stop or reduce intervention as soon as the risk reduces.
6. Check pupil and staff welfare and seek first aid/medical attention where needed.
7. Inform the Headteacher/SLT as soon as possible.
8. Complete the Restrictive Intervention Incident Record as soon as practicable, normally the same day; make linked safeguarding/health and safety records where required.
9. Ensure parents/carers receive required same-day notification and written information/copy of record.
10. Complete pupil and staff debriefs when appropriate and review future support, plans and risk assessment.

Appendix 3: Individual Behaviour Support / Risk Reduction Plan – core content

- Pupil strengths, needs and preferred communication
- Known triggers, early warning signs and indicators of distress
- Reasonable adjustments and environmental/sensory adaptations
- Proactive strategies and successful regulation approaches
- Adults who know the pupil well and preferred support
- Strategies to avoid because they increase distress
- Foreseeable risks to the pupil, peers and staff
- Circumstances in which increased physical contact may be appropriate
- Any relevant medical information or care-plan considerations
- Parent/carer and pupil views
- Relevant professional advice
- Review date and review following any significant incident