



The Burgess Hill Academy
Use of Reasonable Force and Restrictive Interventions
Policy
2026-27

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1. Purpose

The Burgess Hill Academy is committed to providing a safe, calm and inclusive environment in which students and staff are treated with dignity and respect.

The academy will proactively minimise the need for restrictive interventions through clear routines, positive relationships, early support, reasonable adjustments, effective behaviour systems and skilled de-escalation.

There are limited circumstances in which the use of reasonable force or another restrictive intervention may be lawful and necessary. This policy explains:

- the difference between appropriate physical contact, reasonable force, restraint and seclusion;
- the circumstances in which staff may use reasonable force;
- how the academy will prevent and de-escalate incidents;
- the additional considerations for students with SEND, disabilities, medical needs or other vulnerabilities;
- the practices that are prohibited;
- the academy's recording, reporting, review and support arrangements;
- how leaders and governors will monitor implementation and patterns of use.

2. Legal and guidance framework

This policy has regard to:

- sections 93 and 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- sections 550ZA and 550ZB of the Education Act 1996;
- the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025;
- the Department for Education guidance, Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools, effective from 1 April 2026;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty;
- the Human Rights Act 1998;
- the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- the Children and Families Act 2014;
- the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years;
- current Department for Education guidance on behaviour, searching, screening and confiscation, suspension and permanent exclusion.

The academy will use no more force than is necessary, for the least amount of time, and only where the intervention is lawful, necessary and proportionate in the individual circumstances.

3. Definitions

3.1 Appropriate physical contact

Appropriate physical contact is contact that does not amount to the use of force or another restrictive intervention. It may include first aid, guiding or supporting a student, comforting a distressed student, demonstrating a technique in physical education or music, or providing agreed personal or medical care.



The academy does not operate a 'no contact' policy. Staff must use professional judgement and take account of the student's age, understanding, wishes, communication needs, culture, previous experiences and any safeguarding concerns.

3.2 Restrictive intervention

A restrictive intervention is any physical or non-physical action intended to prevent, restrict or subdue the movement of a student's body or part of their body.

3.3 Reasonable force

Reasonable force is a legal term covering physical action by staff that involves a degree of physical contact to control or restrain a student. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time.

3.4 Restraint

Restraint is a non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises a student or limits their movement. It may involve direct physical contact or a non-contact action, such as removing a mobility aid in order to prevent movement.

3.5 Seclusion

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

Seclusion is distinct from a lawful disciplinary removal from a classroom or a student choosing to use a calm or safe space.

3.6 Significant incident

A significant incident is any incident where force goes beyond ordinary appropriate physical contact between staff and students. All such incidents must be recorded and reported in accordance with this policy.

4. Core principles

The academy will:

- prioritise prevention, early intervention and de-escalation;
- use restrictive interventions only where necessary and proportionate;
- use the least restrictive effective response for the least amount of time;
- never use force as a punishment;
- protect the safety and dignity of everyone involved;
- consider the student's welfare, needs and vulnerabilities;
- make reasonable adjustments for disabled students;
- seek help and additional staff support wherever practicable;
- record and report incidents promptly and accurately;
- support students, staff and witnesses after an incident;
- review incidents to reduce the likelihood of recurrence;
- analyse patterns and address any disproportionate use.



5. Who may use reasonable force

All members of academy staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in the limited circumstances set out in law.

The Headteacher may also authorise other people temporarily in lawful charge of students to use reasonable force, where appropriate.

Staff who are likely to need to use planned physical interventions must receive suitable training. In an unforeseen emergency, an untrained member of staff may take reasonable action where this is necessary to prevent immediate harm.

Staff are not expected to place themselves at unreasonable risk. Where intervention would create greater danger, staff should summon assistance, clear other students, contact senior leaders and call the police or emergency services where appropriate.

6. Circumstances in which reasonable force may be used

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

- causing injury to themselves or another person;
- committing a criminal offence;
- damaging property;
- causing disorder among students, during a lesson or otherwise.

Examples may include:

- separating students involved in a fight;
- preventing a student from attacking another person;
- preventing a student from placing themselves in immediate danger, including unsafe absconding;
- removing a student from a dangerous situation where they refuse to move;
- preventing serious damage to property where this presents a significant risk;
- preventing severe disruption where the behaviour creates an immediate safety risk.

The legal power does not mean that force should be used whenever one of these circumstances arises. Staff must first consider whether a safer and less restrictive response is available and likely to be effective.

7. Use of force when searching

The Headteacher and staff authorised by the Headteacher may use reasonable force when searching for an item prohibited by law, where the statutory conditions are met.

Force must not be used solely to search for an item banned under academy rules but not prohibited by law.

Any search must follow the academy's Behaviour Policy and current Department for Education guidance on searching, screening and confiscation.

8. Prevention and de-escalation

Staff should seek to prevent escalation through the academy's established behaviour systems and through calm, respectful and proportionate responses.

Strategies may include:



- using a calm tone, clear language and non-threatening body posture;
- reducing verbal demands and allowing processing time;
- removing an audience or unnecessary stimuli;
- redirecting attention or changing the activity;
- offering limited, realistic choices;
- using a familiar adult or changing the member of staff leading the response;
- providing space and time to regulate;
- acknowledging emotions without accepting unsafe behaviour;
- using agreed visual prompts, scripts or communication systems;
- moving other students to safety;
- summoning senior or specialist support;
- following an individual behaviour support or risk-reduction plan.

Staff should avoid crowding, unnecessary confrontation, repeated ultimatums, provocative language or actions likely to increase distress.

9. Decision-making during an incident

Before and during any restrictive intervention, staff should consider:

- Is intervention necessary to reduce an identified risk?
- Is there a safer or less restrictive alternative?
- Is the intervention likely to reduce the risk rather than escalate the situation?
- Is it proportionate to the seriousness and likelihood of harm?
- Can the minimum necessary intervention be used for the least amount of time?
- What is known about the student's SEND, disability, medical condition, communication, trauma or other vulnerability?
- Are there hazards, weapons, environmental risks or other students nearby?
- Is trained or additional support available?
- Does the intervention need to stop or change because it is increasing distress or risk?

Staff must continually reassess the situation and end the intervention as soon as it is safe to do so.

10. Students with SEND, disabilities, medical needs or other vulnerabilities

Students with SEND, communication difficulties, sensory needs, medical conditions, mental-health needs or experiences of trauma may be particularly distressed by restrictive interventions and may be disproportionately affected by them.

The academy will therefore:

- seek to understand the triggers and functions of behaviour;
- make reasonable adjustments to routines, communication and the environment;
- use staff who know the student well wherever practicable;
- co-produce individual plans with the student and parents where appropriate;
- record agreed prevention, de-escalation and communication strategies;
- complete risk assessments where there is an identified likelihood of restrictive intervention;
- ensure staff have access to relevant information and training;



- review plans periodically and after every significant incident.

An individual plan does not provide automatic or advance authorisation to use force. The lawfulness and reasonableness of any intervention must still be assessed in the circumstances at the time.

11. Planned interventions and individual risk-reduction plans

Where there is a foreseeable and significant risk that restrictive intervention may be required, the academy may develop an individual risk-reduction or behaviour support plan.

The plan should include:

- the student's strengths, needs and communication preferences;
- known triggers and early warning signs;
- preventative adjustments;
- preferred de-escalation strategies;
- actions staff should avoid;
- how the student can request help, space or a change of activity;
- circumstances in which physical contact may be appropriate;
- medical, sensory or safeguarding risks;
- staff training requirements;
- how parents and the student will be involved;
- review arrangements.

Plans will be shared only with staff who need the information and will be reviewed following any significant incident.

12. Unacceptable and prohibited practices

The following are prohibited:

- using force as a punishment or to cause pain, humiliation or fear;
- covering a student's mouth or nose;
- applying pressure to the neck, throat, chest or abdomen;
- using any method that restricts breathing, circulation or the airway;
- deliberately applying pressure to joints or vulnerable areas;
- holding a student in a prone or supine position;
- continuing an intervention after the immediate need has ended;
- using more force than is necessary;
- using a locked room to confine a student;
- asking another student to assist with restraint;
- using any technique for which the member of staff has not been trained, except proportionate emergency action to prevent immediate harm;
- using restraint to secure compliance where there is no immediate lawful justification;
- removing a mobility, communication or medical aid except where this is immediately necessary to prevent serious harm and is the least restrictive option.

If a student is unintentionally taken to the ground, staff must release or reposition them into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.



13. Seclusion

Seclusion will not be used as a punishment, routine behaviour strategy or substitute for appropriate staffing, support or reasonable adjustments.

Any use of seclusion must be necessary to prevent immediate harm, proportionate, for the shortest possible period and subject to continuous appropriate supervision.

A student must never be locked in a room. They must not be left without an effective means of seeking help, and their physical and emotional welfare must be monitored.

Every incident of seclusion must be recorded and reported to parents in writing as soon as practicable, with an aim of doing so on the same day.

14. Appropriate physical contact

Appropriate contact may include:

- administering first aid or agreed medical or personal care;
- guiding a student away from immediate danger;
- supporting a student with mobility or visual impairment;
- demonstrating an exercise, practical technique or use of equipment;
- comforting a distressed student where this is appropriate;
- a handshake, high-five or brief congratulatory gesture;
- contact agreed within an individual plan to support regulation or communication.

Staff should explain the intended contact where practicable and seek the student's agreement. Contact must remain necessary, proportionate, professional and respectful of dignity.

15. Staff training

The academy will determine training needs through risk assessment, incident data, student need and staff responsibilities.

Training will prioritise:

- prevention and de-escalation;
- communication and relational practice;
- recognising distress and escalation;
- SEND, disability, trauma and medical considerations;
- legal powers and professional judgement;
- safe and lawful physical intervention;
- post-incident support, recording and review.

Only staff with suitable, current training should use planned restraint techniques. Training must be delivered by an appropriately accredited or quality-assured provider and refreshed in accordance with the provider's requirements and academy risk assessment.

16. Immediate action after an incident

As soon as it is safe, the academy will:



1. check the immediate physical and emotional wellbeing of the student and staff involved;
2. provide first aid or arrange medical assessment where appropriate;
3. check the welfare of any witnesses who may have been distressed;
4. inform a senior leader and the Designated Safeguarding Lead where relevant;
5. preserve relevant evidence and obtain separate factual accounts;
6. record the incident as soon as practicable, normally on the same day;
7. inform parents in writing as soon as practicable, normally on the same day;
8. consider whether external reporting, safeguarding referral or police involvement is required;
9. arrange appropriate follow-up and debriefing;
10. review any relevant plan or risk assessment.

17. Recording requirements

Every significant use of force, every incident of seclusion and every non-force restraint must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable after the event. Staff involved should endeavour to complete the record on the same day.

The record will include, as a minimum:

- the names of the student and staff directly involved;
- the student's relevant needs and circumstances, including SEND status where applicable;
- the date, time, location and approximate duration;
- what happened before the intervention and any known or potential triggers;
- preventative and de-escalation strategies used;
- why the intervention was assessed as necessary;
- the type and degree of force or other restriction used;
- whether the intervention changed during the incident;
- any injury, distress, medical assessment or treatment;
- post-incident support provided;
- when and how parents were informed;
- the student's, staff members' and witnesses' accounts where appropriate;
- follow-up actions and review arrangements.

The incident record will be entered on the academy's secure safeguarding or behaviour-recording system and retained in accordance with Trust requirements.

18. Reporting to parents

Parents must be informed in writing of every significant use of force, seclusion or restraint as soon as practicable after the incident. The academy will endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

The written report will include:

- the date, time, location and approximate duration;
- why the intervention was assessed as necessary;
- the type and degree of force or restriction used;
- details of any physical injury, where applicable.

Parents will normally be invited to discuss the incident, triggers, de-escalation, existing plans and what may need to change.



Where informing a particular parent would be likely to cause serious harm to the student, the academy will follow the statutory exception and seek safeguarding advice. The incident will be reported to another parent where this can be done safely or, if there is none, to the local authority in which the student ordinarily resides.

19. Post-incident support and review

The academy will review incidents as soon as practicable to understand what happened, why the intervention was used, its impact and how recurrence may be reduced.

The review will consider:

- whether agreed preventative and de-escalation strategies were implemented;
- whether the intervention was necessary, proportionate and ended promptly;
- whether the student's needs and communication were understood;
- whether any injury, distress or safeguarding concern arose;
- whether additional medical, pastoral or staff support is required;
- whether the environment, staffing or academy systems contributed;
- whether an individual plan or risk assessment should be introduced or amended;
- whether staff training or wider practice needs to change.

Where appropriate, separate reflective conversations will be held with the student and staff involved, ideally supported by a member of staff who was not directly involved. The purpose is learning, welfare and relationship repair, not securing an agreed version of events.

20. Allegations, safeguarding concerns and complaints

Any concern that force or another restrictive intervention was inappropriate, excessive, punitive or abusive must be reported immediately to the Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Allegations about staff will be managed in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education, the academy's safeguarding procedures and, where appropriate, advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer.

Complaints will be considered under the Sussex Learning Trust Concerns and Complaints Policy. The fact that a complaint has been made does not remove the academy's duty to preserve records, support those involved and complete safeguarding or health-and-safety reporting.

21. Monitoring, equality and governance

Leaders will monitor:

- the number, type and duration of incidents;
- repeat incidents involving individual students;
- locations, times and patterns of escalation;
- injuries and medical treatment;
- use by department, year group or staff role;
- the effectiveness of prevention and individual plans;
- training needs;
- any disproportionate use involving students with SEND, disabilities, protected characteristics or other vulnerabilities;
- completion and timeliness of recording and parent reporting.



The Headteacher will ensure that significant concerns and themes are reported to Sussex Learning Trust and the Local Governing Body through appropriate confidential assurance arrangements.

Data will be used to improve practice, not to create crude performance measures. Small cohorts and the individual circumstances of incidents will be interpreted carefully.

22. Roles and responsibilities

22.1 Sussex Learning Trust

- provide policy, legal, safeguarding and health-and-safety support;
- monitor significant risks and assurance;
- support appropriate training and quality assurance;
- ensure concerns and allegations are handled through Trust procedures.

22.2 Local Governing Body

- receive assurance that statutory recording and reporting procedures are followed;
- review anonymised patterns and disproportionate use;
- challenge leaders about prevention, staff training and repeated incidents;
- avoid unnecessary access to identifiable operational records.

22.3 Headteacher

- ensure this policy is implemented and communicated;
- ensure suitable recording and reporting procedures are in place;
- ensure staff receive appropriate guidance and training;
- authorise staff for searches and temporary persons in lawful charge where required;
- ensure incidents, complaints and allegations are reviewed appropriately;
- address failures to follow policy.

22.4 Assistant Principal responsible for Behaviour and Culture

- provide operational oversight of prevention, de-escalation and behaviour support;
- monitor incident recording and follow-up;
- coordinate individual plans and staff support with inclusion and safeguarding leaders;
- analyse patterns and ensure actions have named owners and deadlines.

22.5 Designated Safeguarding Lead

- advise on safeguarding, vulnerability and parental-reporting exceptions;
- ensure concerns about staff conduct are escalated appropriately;
- coordinate referrals and support where an incident indicates possible harm.

22.6 SENDCo and inclusion leaders

- advise on reasonable adjustments, communication and individual planning;
- support risk assessment and co-produced behaviour support plans;
- review disproportionate or repeated use involving students with SEND.



22.7 All staff

- use prevention and de-escalation wherever possible;
- use reasonable force only when lawful, necessary and proportionate;
- protect dignity and safety;
- seek assistance where practicable;
- report and record incidents promptly;
- participate in review and support.

23. Related policies

- Behaviour Policy;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- SEND Policy and SEND Information Report;
- Supporting Students with Medical Conditions Policy;
- First Aid procedures;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation procedures;
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion procedures;
- Concerns and Complaints Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Educational Visits Policy.

24. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where legislation or guidance changes, a significant incident identifies a weakness, data indicates disproportionate or repeated use, or academy or Trust arrangements change.



Appendix 1: Restrictive Intervention Incident Record

A. Incident details

Student name	
Year group / tutor group	
SEND status / relevant needs	
Date	
Start and finish time	
Location	
Reporting staff member	
Other staff directly involved	
Witnesses	

B. Type and legal purpose of intervention

Reason / type	Tick or detail
Prevent injury to the student	☐
Prevent injury to another person	☐
Prevent a criminal offence	☐
Prevent damage to property	☐
Prevent disorder creating an immediate safety risk	☐
Significant use of force	☐
Seclusion	☐
Non-force restraint	☐
Emergency use of force during a search for a legally prohibited item	☐

C. Events leading to the incident

Describe what happened before the incident, including any known or potential triggers.



D. Prevention and de-escalation

Record the strategies used, the student's response and why these did not sufficiently reduce the risk.

E. Why intervention was necessary

Describe the immediate risk and why a less restrictive response was not sufficient.

F. Intervention used

Describe the physical or non-physical intervention, degree of force, staff positions, any changes and approximate duration.

G. Outcome and impact

Describe what happened, any injury, distress, damage or effect on others.

H. Medical and welfare response

Record first aid, medical assessment, safeguarding action and support for the student, staff and witnesses.



I. Student and witness accounts

Record or attach separate accounts. Note where an account could not be obtained and why.

J. Parent notification

Record date, time, method, person informed, information provided and any planned follow-up.

K. Review and action

Record learning, changes to plans or risk assessments, training or system actions, named owners and deadlines.

L. Sign-off

Staff member completing record	
Date and time completed	
Senior leader review	
DSL review required / completed	
Parent written notification sent	
Further review date	



Appendix 2: Parent written notification - minimum information

The academy's written notification following a significant use of force, seclusion or restraint will include at least:

- the student's name;
- the date, time, location and approximate duration;
- a brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary;
- a brief account of the type and degree of force or restriction used;
- details of any physical injury, where applicable;
- details of immediate welfare or medical support;
- the name or role of the person parents may contact for a follow-up discussion.

The full internal incident record will not normally be sent automatically because it may contain confidential information about staff or other students. Requests for information will be considered in accordance with data-protection, safeguarding and legal requirements.

Document Version Control

Date	Version	Comment	Ratified by	Reviewer
September 2026	v1		LGB	Headteacher