USE OF REASONABLE FORCE AND RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTION POLICY

2026

Date of Adoption by the Governing Board:	1st September 2026

1. Aims and scope

At The Dales School we strive to create a safe, secure and supportive environment for all our pupils and staff.

There are times when the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, is lawful and necessary to keep people safe. However, we understand that the use of restrictive interventions can have a significant impact on pupils, staff and parents/carers. In our school, they are only ever considered as a last resort, once all other prevention and de-escalation strategies have been exhausted.

This policy aims to:

- Minimise the need to use restrictive interventions, through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies
- Help school staff feel confident in knowing how to use restrictive interventions safely, appropriately and lawfully, when they are necessary
- Clearly set out the steps for recording and reporting incidents of reasonable force, seclusion and restraint
- Protect the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all pupils and staff, and help create a positive and safe place for everyone at school

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education (DfE) guidance on restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools. It also meets the requirements of:

- Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, inserted by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009
- Section 550ZA and section 550ZB of the Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- The Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Department for Education guidance on searching, screening and confiscation

3. Definitions

The terms we use in this policy are defined as follows. These definitions are based on the Department for Education's guidance on restrictive interventions (linked to in section 2 of this policy).

- **Restrictive interventions** are used to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body or part of the body. This policy uses 'restrictive interventions' as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways.

  Examples of restrictive interventions could include:

  - Supervised seclusion of a pupil in an area away from others, where the pupil is prevented from leaving for their own safety and/or the safety of others
  - Passive physical contact, such as a staff member blocking a pupil's path if they're running towards danger (like a busy road), or staff standing between pupils to prevent a fight

- **Reasonable force** refers to the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to restrain children, using no more force than is needed for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

  Examples of the use of reasonable force could include:

  - A staff member guiding a pupil to safety by the arm
  - Staff breaking up a fight between pupils
  - A staff member restraining a pupil to prevent injury to the pupil, or others

- **Restraint** is a form of non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact.

  Examples could include:

  - A staff member using a P&I hold when the pupil is attempting to harm themselves or others

- **Seclusion** is a non-disciplinary intervention that keeps a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevents them from leaving, for the safety of that pupil and/or others.
  - See section 3.2 of this policy for more information on seclusion.

- A **significant incident** is any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between a member of staff and a pupil. This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

  See section 3.1 of this policy for more information on appropriate physical contact.

3.1 Appropriate physical contact with pupils

The Dales School does not have a 'no contact' policy. We do not grant any requests by parents/carers or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions.

There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to have some physical contact with pupils which does not give rise to any question over the use of reasonable force or other restrictive interventions.

Examples include:

- Providing first aid to a pupil
- Guiding or escorting a pupil through the school building or on a school trip by holding their hand
- Comforting a pupil who is upset
- Offering congratulations or praise, such as with a pat on the back or handshake
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- When demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching

In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in any given situation, staff should use their professional judgement, and have regard to:

- Our school's child protection and safeguarding policy
- The specific circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present
- Factors including, but not limited to:
    - The pupil's age
    - Any known vulnerabilities, special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
    - Whether any alternative strategies that don't involve physical contact can be used

3.2 Seclusion

As defined above, seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention that keeps a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevents them from leaving, for the safety of that pupil and/or others (see seclusion guidance for further details).

At The Dales we only use seclusion as a safety measure when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. Seclusion is not used as a threat or punishment. Seclusion is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour.

During seclusion:

- The pupil will be secluded in a safe place that does not feel threatening or intimidating to them. Zones of Regulation spaces within classrooms can be used as safe spaces.
- The pupil will be supervised at all times, by at least one member of staff who has visibility of the pupil at all times.

As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil will be allowed to leave.

Any incident involving the use of seclusion will be recorded and reported in accordance with the procedures set out in section 12 of this policy.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Reviewing and approving this policy
- Ensuring that a procedure is in place for recording and reporting each:
    - Significant incident involving force
    - Seclusion incident
    - Restraint incident
- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the procedures for recording and reporting the use of force, seclusion and restraint are followed
- Regularly reviewing and interrogating data on the use of restrictive interventions in our school
- Supporting and challenging school leaders to identify where changes may be needed to practice. For example:
    - If approaches have been used for some time but haven't been effective
    - If there is any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions, including in relation to pupils who share protected characteristics or have SEND or other types of vulnerabilities

4.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall implementation and oversight of this policy
- Making sure that appropriate and high-quality training on preventative strategies and the safe and lawful use of restrictive interventions is provided for staff who need it, based on our school's individual context and needs
- Ensuring adequate staffing levels to support positive behaviour management
- Monitoring incidents involving restrictive interventions, including regular review of incidents to refine and improve processes
- Ensuring compliance with recording and reporting requirements
- Authorising staff to search a pupil or their belongings if they have good reason to think the pupil has a prohibited or banned item
- Following the procedures set out in our complaints policy to deal with any complaint about the use of restrictive interventions
- Following the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education if an allegation regarding inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive intervention is made against a member of staff

4.3 All staff

All members of staff are responsible for:

- Making sure they have read and understood the principles of this policy and any other linked policies
- Using de-escalation techniques and positive behaviour management strategies to try to minimise and prevent the need for restrictive interventions
- Accurately recording every seclusion incident, restraint incident and significant incident involving force that they are involved in
- Reporting these incidents to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL)
- Recording any injuries that occur as part of an incident involving restrictive intervention, and following our health and safety policy to ensure these are reported to the Health and Safety Executive where necessary
- Taking part in training on preventative strategies and the safe and lawful use of restrictive interventions, if relevant to their role (this may include additional training appropriate to their responsibilities)
- Engaging in follow-up conversation(s) to debrief and reflect on incidents involving restrictive intervention that they were involved in, to help us understand what happened and why
- Reporting every seclusion incident, restraint incident and significant incident involving force to each parent/carer of the pupil involved
- Working with pupils, parents/carers and relevant school staff to develop and review Positive Relationship Plans and risk assessments of all pupils where it's been identified that there is an increased likelihood of the need to use restrictive interventions
- Working with pupils, parents/carers, and all relevant staff and other relevant professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies

4.4 Designated safeguarding lead (DSL)

The DSL is responsible for:

- Making sure records are kept securely and in accordance with safeguarding and data protection procedures
- Contacting the local authority in cases where informing a pupil's parent/carer of the use of reasonable force, seclusion or restraint on their child would put that child at risk of significant harm (see sections 12.2 and 12.3 of this policy)

4.5 Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team area responsible for:

- Providing advice and support on the application of this policy
- To ensure that staff induction is high quality
- Contributing to staff training on behaviour management, including the use of restrictive interventions

5. Acceptable uses of force

All of The Dales School staff, including our paid supply staff, have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain situations.

Staff can use reasonable force to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- Hurting themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence
- Damaging property
- Causing disorder among pupils, in or out of lessons

While all staff have this power, some staff, especially those who work closely with pupils who might show challenging behaviour, are more likely to need to use it than others.

We will ensure staff are adequately trained and that risk assessments are carried out where necessary. See section 11 of this policy for information on training and risk assessments.

Any significant incident involving the use of force will be recorded and reported on CPOMs in accordance with the procedures set out in section 12 of this policy.

6. Unacceptable uses of force

It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment. We never use force as a sanction, threat or deterrent.

Our staff understand that any form of force or restraint carries a risk of physical and psychological harm, so we always avoid using these measures where possible.

The following uses of force are **never acceptable**:

- Staff using force for the purpose of punishment

- Staff restraining a pupil in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation, for example by covering their nose and/or mouth or applying pressure to their neck or abdomen
- Staff using force on the ground. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their hold or move into a safer position as quickly as possible

Section 5 of this policy sets out the instances where staff may use reasonable force. Section 9 of this policy provides guidance for staff on what to consider before using it.

7. Using reasonable force to search pupils

The headteacher and any member of staff authorised by the headteacher have a statutory power to search a pupil or their belongings if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item (as listed in the DfE's searching, screening and confiscation guidance) or an item banned under our school rules.

They **can** use reasonable force to search for prohibited items (as listed in the DfE's searching, screening and confiscation guidance), such as knives, weapons, stolen items or illegal drugs. They **cannot** use reasonable force to search for items that are banned under our school rules only, such as mobile phones.

The decision to use reasonable force to carry out a search should be made carefully, on a case-by-case basis and taking into consideration the level of risk to pupils and staff.

8. Prevention and de-escalation strategies

Restrictive intervention is used only when necessary. We aim to minimise its use as much as possible, using both whole-school and individual approaches.

The Dales whole-school approach includes:

- Consideration of how our school and classroom environment can support all pupils to achieve and thrive
- Sharing best practice for whole-class positive behaviour management
- Training staff in effective communication strategies, such as using appropriate tone of voice and empathy to aid de-escalation
- Development of working staff-pupil relationships and trust
- Recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning

The individual approaches we use include:

- Working closely with parents/carers to support individual pupils
- Strategies to support individual pupils based on their identified needs, including:
    - The development of Positive Relationship Plans
    - Strategies to help pupils regulate before their behaviour escalates

8.1 De-escalation when a situation arises

When a staff member is faced with a situation where a restrictive intervention may need to be used, they should consider using de-escalation techniques first, wherever possible. Techniques that could be used in these situations include:

- Having open body language and being aware of a pupil's personal space
- Using empathy and showing understanding
- Distraction techniques
- Offering a calm space for the pupil to go to support regulation
- Verbal reminders – calmly reminding pupil of the behaviour that is expected

9. Deciding when the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate

9.1 Necessity and proportionality

The decision on whether to use restrictive interventions is down to the professional judgment of the staff member and will always depend on the individual circumstances of each situation.

Staff should always consider whether there are other ways to manage the situation, such as the de-escalation techniques outlined in section 8.1 of this policy and/or seeking assistance from a colleague. However, there may be times when staff have no other choice but to use restrictive interventions, to reduce the risk of harm to the pupil and/or others.

When assessing whether a restrictive intervention is required, staff should always consider:

- **Is it necessary?**
  - Are there other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage the situation?
  - Is a restrictive intervention likely to successfully reduce the risks, or could its use escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself?
- **Is it proportionate?**
  - Staff should use the **least** amount of force or the **least** restrictive intervention for the **least** amount of time required to reduce the risks
  - If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy
  - Staff should consider the individual circumstances of the pupil, such as their age, size and any medical conditions, SEND or other vulnerabilities

9.2 Pupil and staff welfare

Pupil welfare

The most important consideration when using a restrictive intervention is the safety and wellbeing of the pupil involved, as well as the safety of other pupils and staff. At The Dales we always consider the potential impact on the pupil's welfare balanced against any actions taken. For example, staff should bear in mind that pupils who have experienced adverse life events, trauma or neglect, or who have diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, communication difficulties or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.

If a restrictive intervention is needed, staff should always aim to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity. This includes consideration of the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.

The Dales staff should, wherever possible, clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and what the pupil needs to do, including using verbal and non-verbal strategies where needed, and giving time for the pupil to process information and respond where appropriate.

Staff should seek to understand how the pupil is feeling and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

Support following an incident

As soon as possible after any use of restrictive intervention, we will evaluate the incident to understand why restrictive intervention was used, the impact on pupils and staff, any patterns and trends, and how another incident could be avoided in the future.

The Dales School will make sure each pupil and staff member involved get the right support, including a medical assessment and treatment if needed, and an opportunity to reflect on and talk through the incident. Staff will be encouraged to take a break after the incident.

This follow-up conversation(s) will be part of the overall debriefing process, which will take place within 24hrs, to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from all parties involved. SLT will be part of the debriefing when the behaviour is of a serious nature. Conversations should also aim to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue.

Solution focused meetings will take place if a concern is ongoing and this process will be facilitated by an SLT staff member who was not involved in the incident. We will always continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed.

Depending on the circumstances, support and or time out will be offered to those who witnessed the incident.

10. Considerations for pupils

We understand that our pupils may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Pupils who have difficulty communicating verbally might show their needs and discomfort through their actions.

The Dales School is committed to understanding what might trigger challenging behaviour in pupils, and to providing the right support and an inclusive environment.

We will carry out risk assessments for pupils, where we identify that there is an increased likelihood of needing to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions. Our school is aware of its duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities to avoid disadvantage and ensure they can take part in school life as fully as possible.

We will utilise staff who know individual pupils well to help identify and manage risk, such as trigger points when challenging behaviour is more likely to occur, and develop proactive strategies to reduce the likelihood of restrictive interventions being used. We will also work with the pupil, their parents/carers and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

These strategies might include:

- Removing stimuli that may be causing distress to the pupil
- Staff members changing how they communicate with the pupil, such as being more mindful of body language, facial expressions and/or tone of voice
- Helping the pupil express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- Engaging the pupil in activities to help them regulate their emotions

- Distracting the pupil with familiar objects or activities to redirect their attention

All children will have a Positive Relationship Plan. The plan will be reviewed regularly, and following any significant incident, with the pupil and parents/carers to make sure it's still working well. The plan will:

- Outline any aspects of the school environment which the pupil finds challenging
- Explain the best ways to communicate with the pupil when in different zones and helpful strategies to be used
- In some cases, specify when increased physical contact with staff might be appropriate. These situations will be discussed with everyone involved and clearly written down in the plan.

11. Training and risk assessments

All staff at The Dales who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions are adequately trained in their safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies.

We carry out risk assessments to ensure that staff who regularly work alongside pupils where the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions may be required can do so as safely as possible.This is inline with our duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all our staff.

12. Recording and reporting arrangements

Following our legal duty we record and report all:

- Significant incidents involving force (see section 3 of this policy for a definition of 'significant incident')
- Seclusion incidents
- Restraint incidents

12.1 Recording incidents

We have clear processes in place for recording the incidents listed above using our CPOMs system.

Staff must record incidents in writing, as soon as possible after the event, and should endeavour to do this on the same day. Staff should do this even if the use of restrictive interventions is agreed as part of a pupil's Positive Relationship Plan.

For significant incidents involving force, we will record:

- The names of the pupil and staff members directly involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil
- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- A clear and brief description of what happened, including:
    - What led up to the incident
    - Any known or potential triggers for the behaviour
    - Any preventative or de-escalation strategies used
    - The type and degree of reasonable force used
    - Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable

- A brief explanation of why using force was assessed as necessary in that situation
- Details of any support given after the incident, such as medical help or emotional support
- Detail of parent/carer contact
- Details of any follow up action to be taken

For seclusion incidents and restraint incidents, we will record:

- The use of seclusion as in intervention will be recorded, in collaboration with parent/cares, on the Positive Relationship Plan
- The names of the pupil and staff members directly involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil
- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- A brief explanation of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that situation
- Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- Details of any support given after the incident, such as medical help or emotional support
- Details of how parent/carer are going to be informed
- Details of any follow up action to be taken e.g. arrange a solution focused meeting

Note: if a seclusion or restraint incident also constitutes a significant incident involving force, we will record it in line with our procedure for recording significant incidents involving force. It does not need to be recorded twice.

Completed reports will be kept securely and retained in line with our data protection procedures.

12.2 Reporting incidents to parents/carers

When reporting an incident to parents/carers, we will take the following steps:

We will inform parents/carers about an incident as soon as we can after it happens and will endeavour to do this on the same day. How this is done will be in the preferred communication for the parent/carer e.g. email or phone call. We will do this even if the use of restrictive interventions is agreed as part of a pupil's Positive Relationship Plan. We will record this on our CPOMs system and detail any follow up that is required.

There is 1 exception to this:

- If a member of staff thinks that telling the pupil's parents/carers would likely result in significant harm to that pupil. In these cases, we will 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 where the pupil ordinarily resides (see section 12.3 of this policy)

When we report **significant incidents involving force** to parents/carers, we will include the following details:

- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- A brief explanation of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that situation
- A short description of the type and degree of force that was used
- Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable

'When we report significant restrictive interventions to parents/carers they will receive a phone call on the same day as the incident and supplied with a written record of the incident, as soon as practicable and we will attempt for this to be within 24 hours.'

Note: If a seclusion or restraint incident also constitutes a significant incident involving force, we will report it in line with our procedure for reporting significant incidents involving force. It does not need to be reported twice.

When reporting to parents/carers, we will have regard to data protection requirements when deciding what information to share. For example, we will not include any identifying details of any other pupil.

Following up with parents/carers after an incident

Where serious incidents have occurred parents/carers will be invited to have a follow-up discussion about the incident, where appropriate. The discussion might include:

- Any behavioural triggers or warning signs of an impending incident
- A collaborative review of the Positive Relationship Plan
- What de-escalation strategies were used and how effective they were
- What might be done differently in the future

12.3 Reporting incidents to the local authority

In cases where we have assessed that an incident needs to be reported to the local authority where the pupil ordinarily resides (as outlined in section 12.2), this report will include all the information that we would normally share with the pupil's parents/carers, as well as the reasons why we thought it was unsafe to tell the pupil's parents/carers directly.

In cases where a pupil has parents/carers and is the subject of a care order under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 or is being accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, we will report the incident to the relevant local authority in addition to the parents/carers (unless we deem it unsafe to inform the parents/carers, as set out in section 12.2 of this policy).

13. Complaints and allegations

Any complaints about the use of restrictive interventions will be handled through our school's complaints policy, which you can find on our website.

We take any allegation of inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions made against a member of staff very seriously. We will deal with allegations in line with the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education.

14. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by Amy Taylor (Deputy Head Teacher).

At every review, this policy will be approved by the full governing board.

15. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Relationship policy
- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Complaints policy
- Health and safety policy
- Seclusion guidance

Appendix 1

Guidance on the use of Seclusion

Definition

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention that keeps a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevents them from leaving, for the safety of that pupil and/or others.

Use of Seclusion

We only use seclusion as a safety measure when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. Seclusion is not used as a threat or punishment. Seclusion is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. Seclusion, as an intervention, must support and maintain the relationship between the staff member and the child.

During seclusion:

The pupil will be secluded in a safe place that does not feel threatening or intimidating to them. Zones room spaces within classrooms can be used as safe spaces. The child's wellbeing will be a high priority.

The pupil will be supervised at all times, by at least one member of staff who has visibility of the pupil at all times.

As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil will be allowed to leave.

Recording the use of Seclusion

The use of Seclusion as a strategy will be recorded in the Positive Relationship Plan (PRP) in collaboration with parent/carers. A good practice example of how this is recorded is as follows - 'I may benefit from time alone in a safe space when I am very dysregulated and unsafe. Please use my visuals to support me and a change of face can really help.'

This must be shared with Amy Taylor (Deputy Head Teacher) and Sally Collins (Deputy Head Teacher). On CPOMs the following must be recorded each time seclusion is used:

1. Tick the Seclusion box in the category section
2. The names of the pupil and staff members directly involved
3. Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil
4. The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
5. A brief explanation of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that situation
6. Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
7. Details of any support given after the incident, such as medical help or emotional support
8. Details of how parent/carer are going to be informed
9. Details of any follow up action to be taken e.g. arrange a solution focused meeting
10. SLT will provide a written record to parents/carers.