

September 2026

Next Review date: September 2027

Restrictive Interventions Policy (including the use of Reasonable Force and Seclusion)

This policy applies to all academies managed by Wootton Academy Trust (WAT).



**Wootton
Academy Trust**

Person responsible: Head of School and Head of College

Approved by: Executive Headteacher

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to shape the culture, espouse the values and align behaviour to the ethos that allows all members of the Wootton Academy Trust community to feel safe, valued and respected.
- 1.2 Wootton Academy Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all students and staff. The Trust recognises that the use of restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force and seclusion, can have a significant impact on students, staff and families. The Trust, therefore, prioritises prevention, early intervention and de-escalation to minimise the need for restrictive practices.
- 1.3 This policy aims to help schools proactively minimise the need to use restrictive interventions through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies, and when necessary, to help school staff feel more confident in knowing how to use these interventions safely, appropriately and lawfully.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to:

- All teaching and support staff
- Agency staff
- Volunteers
- Contractors working within the school
- Local Governance Board members and Trustees

2.2 Care and consideration will always be given to the age, maturity and individual needs of the child.

3. Legal Framework

- 3.1 Wootton Academy Trust fully recognises the responsibility it has under section 157 of the Education Act 2002 to have arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 as school's have a duty to staff and others, to keep them safe from foreseeable hazards.
- 3.2 This policy is informed by:
 - Education and Inspections Act 2006 (sections 93 and 93A)
 - Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No.2) (England) Regulations 2025
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Human Rights Act 1998
 - Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education (latest version)
 - Behaviour in Schools guidance (DfE)
 - Restrictive Interventions, including Use of Reasonable Force, in Schools (DfE, April 2026)
 - SEND Code of Practice

4. Related Policies

- 4.1 This policy should be read alongside the school and college's Behaviour Policies, Safeguarding Policy, SEND Policy, and Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance.

5. Terminology

- 5.1 The definitions below are provided for clarity. This should not be construed as an endorsement or otherwise for their use in schools or colleges.

Restrictive intervention: A means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a student. This guidance uses 'restrictive interventions' as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain students in different ways.

Reasonable force: A term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of school or college staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances. "Reasonable" means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

Significant incident: Any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between students and staff. This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

Seclusion: A non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a student confined to a place away from others, and preventing them from leaving either by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave. Seclusion is a safety intervention and must not be used for disciplinary purposes, or involve threat of punishment. It is distinct from the 'LRC', which is a disciplinary response and is therefore governed by our Behaviour Policy.

Restraint: A term used in legislation referring to a non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a student or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact.

6. Policy

- 6.1 No school within the trust will operate a "no contact" policy, as this can leave staff unable to intervene where reasonable to protect students. The use of appropriate physical contact is set out in Appendix C.
- 6.2 Restrictive interventions will only be used when absolutely necessary and when such use is lawful, reasonable and proportionate. The safety and welfare of students will remain paramount, and their dignity will be considered at all times. Students with SEND or vulnerabilities will receive appropriate consideration.
- 6.3 Pre-emption, prevention and de-escalation strategies will be used wherever possible. Restrictive interventions will only ever be used as a last resort and never a form of punishment.
- 6.4 All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances. This includes preventing a student from:
 - causing injury to themselves or others
 - committing a criminal offence
 - damaging property
 - causing disorder among students at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise
- 6.5 It is unlawful to use force for punishment.
- 6.6 Use of force must never:
 - Restrict breathing or circulation
 - Apply pressure to the neck, abdomen or chest
 - Involve covering the mouth or nose
 - Be maintained longer than necessary
- 6.7 Ground holds should be avoided. If a student is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their holds or re-position into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.
- 6.8 Seclusion may only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a student is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation.

Seclusion **must not**:

 - be used for non-compliance, defiance or disruption.
 - be used as a disciplinary sanction.

Seclusion **must**:

 - be proportionate and recorded.
 - involve continuous direct supervision.
 - take place in a safe, non-threatening environment.
- 6.9 Heads and authorised staff have a statutory power to search students or their possessions where there are reasonable grounds to suspect the presence of a prohibited item. Reasonable force may be used where necessary to search for legally prohibited items, but not for items banned under school rules only. Detailed procedures for searching, screening and confiscation are set out in the school and college's

Behaviour Policies and follow the Department for Education's Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance.

- 6.10 School and college leaders will ensure that all staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions receive appropriate training. This will include regular refresher training and induction training for new staff. School and college leaders are responsible for ensuring training records are maintained and monitored.
- 6.11 Training will cover preventative strategies, positive handling, and the safe and lawful use of restrictive interventions and reasonable force. All training must be fully aligned to the principles set out in this policy and DfE guidance.
- 6.12 The school and college will carry out risk assessments to ensure that staff who regularly work alongside students, where the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions may be required, can do so as safely as possible.
- 6.13 Where there is an identified risk of restrictive intervention being required, risk assessment will be developed and formally agreed with parents/carers prior to implementation. The risk assessment will cover all behaviours where physical intervention may be necessary and will set out which actions will be taken.
- 6.14 The Trust recognises that students with SEND may be disproportionately subject to restrictive interventions. The school and college will identify triggers and patterns, develop pre-emptive strategies and produce a Passport involving parents wherever possible.
- 6.15 Once agreed, risk assessments must be shared with relevant colleagues. The risk assessment will be reviewed at least every four-to-six weeks, or following any significant incident.
- 6.16 The decision to use a restrictive intervention must always be based on the specific circumstances at the time. The existence of a risk assessment does not automatically justify the use of restrictive intervention; any action taken must remain lawful, necessary and proportionate.
- 6.17 The school and college retains their legal authority to use reasonable force and restrictive interventions where necessary and proportionate, even where agreement on a risk assessment has not been reached.
- 6.18 The Trust has statutory duties under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the 2025 Regulations. This sets out that all incidents of:
- Significant use of force
 - Seclusion
 - Restraint (including non-force restraint)

must be recorded as soon as practicable and no later than the same day where possible.

Appendix 1 outlines our recording and reporting procedures.

- 6.19 Parents must be informed in writing of all incidents as soon as practicable and no later than the same day. The requirement to report applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a student's risk assessment.
- 6.20 Exceptions apply only where informing a parent/carers could result in significant harm to the student. In this instance, the staff member must report the incident to any parent/carers to whom it can be reported without resulting in significant harm or, if there are none, to the local authority within which the student is ordinarily resident.
- 6.21 Written communication will include:
- Time, date, location and duration
 - Why intervention was necessary
 - Type and degree of force used
 - Injuries sustained, if applicable
- 6.22 Following any restrictive intervention, a structured debrief will take place and, if necessary, a medical assessment. The debrief will include student and staff voice. Wellbeing support for students and staff, including any students who witnessed the incident, will be offered.

7. Responsibilities

7.1 Trustees will:

Seek assurance that incidents are recorded, reported to parents and reviewed appropriately.

7.2 Trust leaders will:

- Review this policy annually.
- Ensure the school and college record, report and review incidents appropriately.
- Monitor and review data collated through quality assurance activities to identify trends across academies, identify patterns at school or college level and interrogate the effectiveness of student support measures, challenging and supporting leaders where patterns indicate concern.
- Use data to identify and implement improvements to policies and practices.
- Consider the limitations of data and what can be inferred from it.
- Report key findings to the Trust Board.

7.3 The Heads will:

- Ensure staff understand and follow this policy.
- Ensure appropriate staff training is in place and that records of training are kept up to date. This includes induction training for new staff and refresher training for established staff.
- Ensure procedures are in place and used correctly for the recording and reporting of significant use of force, seclusion and restraint, and communicate these expectations to school staff.
- Ensure all relevant incidents are promptly reported to parents in line with statutory requirements.
- Review incidents to confirm they were lawful, necessary and proportionate.
- Ensure safeguarding and SEND considerations are addressed.
- Identify any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to students who share protected characteristics, have SEND, or other types of vulnerability.
- Understand students' repeat patterns and triggers to interrogate the effectiveness of student support measures, share this information with teachers who work with those students to better support them and, where appropriate, their parents, to establish a risk assessment or revise an existing risk assessment.
- Monitor the effectiveness of prevention and de-escalation strategies.
- Identify areas of learning and development for school staff, supporting specific departments and teachers to improve understanding and practice.
- Provide termly data for monitoring purposes.

7.4 All staff will:

- Adhere to this policy in practice.
- Use pre-emptive and de-escalation strategies wherever possible.
- Apply restrictive interventions only when lawful, necessary and proportionate.
- Record and report incidents in line with school and college procedures.

8. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

8.1 The Deputy Head for Inclusion will monitor and review this policy and related procedures annually, to ensure its continuing appropriateness and effectiveness.

8.2 This policy will be reviewed and approved annually by the Executive Head.

9. Complaints and allegations

9.1 Any complaints regarding the use of restrictive interventions should be dealt with in accordance with the school and college's normal complaints procedure.

- If an allegation regarding inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions is made against a member of staff, the procedures in the current Keeping Children Safe in Education should be followed. This includes the provisions regarding suspension of staff.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1: Recording and Reporting Procedure

School and colleges have a statutory duty to record and report any use of restrictive interventions. The following procedure for recording significant incidents must be followed by all schools. Following these procedures will ensure compliance with the school's statutory duty under both section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

RECORDING

1. Immediate Recording

- Any incident involving restrictive interventions and use of seclusion, with or without the use of force, must be recorded as soon as practicable after it occurs using CPOMS.
- The staff member(s) directly involved must add the record to CPOMS on the same day of the incident.
- This requirement applies even if the intervention was agreed in advance as part of the student's risk assessment.

2. Responsibility

- The staff member(s) involved are responsible for recording the incident.

3. Minimum Information to Record

Essential information must be entered on CPOMS, using the 'Physical Intervention' and/or 'Seclusion' incident tag/s. **Be aware that the written record will be shared with parents.** The record must, therefore, be accurate, factual and non-emotional. It must be professional in tone and grammar and include:

- Student and staff names directly involved
- Relevant student needs or circumstances, including consideration around any special educational need or disability
- Time, date, location, and approximate duration of the intervention
- Brief account of the incident, including:
 - What led up to it
 - Identified or potential triggers
 - Preventative or de-escalation strategies used
 - If relevant, the type and degree of force applied
 - Any physical injuries sustained
- Justification for the use of force, explaining why it was necessary in that instance
- Post-incident support, e.g., medical treatment, counselling, or other follow-up offered/taken up
- Confirmation of parent/carer notification

4. Additional Information

Additional information can be captured separately to support evaluation and learning. This could include:

- Accounts from the student and witnesses
- Follow-up actions taken
- Any other information useful to identify best practices and areas for improvement

5. Review and Evaluation

- A full log of all recorded restrictive interventions captured will be reviewed termly within each setting. Appropriate staff (Head and DSL) will access complete records via CPOMS.
- The data outlined above is also used to populate a reporting dashboard for monitoring key metrics (types of intervention, trends by date etc.) without individual incident detail.

REPORTING

1. Informing Parents

- Inform parents as soon as practicable after the incident.
- Unless there are exceptional circumstances (outlined below), you **must** notify parents, in writing, on the same day. If force was used, **this is a legal requirement.**
- You must provide parents with the written record of the incident.

Exceptions – do **not** notify parents if:

- The student is 20 years old or over, or
- Informing parents would likely result in significant harm to the student.

If an exception applies, you must:

- Inform only those parents where no risk of serious harm exists, or
- If none exist, inform the local authority where the student normally resides.

The requirement to inform parents still applies even if interventions are part of an agreed risk assessment.

2. Follow-Up with Parents

Where appropriate, invite parents to a follow-up discussion covering:

- Any triggers or early warning signs
- Whether the risk assessment was followed
- The de-escalation strategies used and their effectiveness
- What could be done differently in future

Use this discussion to update the risk assessment, if needed.

APPENDIX 2: Appropriate Physical Contact with Students

There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to have some physical contact with students which does not give rise to any question over the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions. This will depend on context.

The following list is non-exhaustive, but examples of occasions when physical contact is generally appropriate include:

- providing first aid
- guiding or escorting students (e.g. holding a vulnerable student's hand when walking in line, or supporting a student to access a self-regulation space they have chosen)
- comforting a distressed student
- congratulating or praising a student (e.g. handshake or brief pat on the back)
- demonstrating how to use a musical instrument
- demonstrating physical exercises or techniques during PE or sports coaching

In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in each situation, the member of staff should use their professional judgement and have regard to:

- the Trust's safeguarding policy
- the context and whether other adults are present
- the student's age, maturity and understanding
- the student's known needs and vulnerabilities, including SEND
- whether a non-contact alternative is available and appropriate
- any risk assessment relevant to the student or situation, if appropriate

APPENDIX 3: Determining When Restrictive Interventions May Be Appropriate

There may be occasions when staff need to consider the use of restrictive interventions. The decision must always be based on the specific circumstances at the time. Staff should consider the following questions.

Is it necessary?

- Have less restrictive options been attempted or considered?
- Is the intervention likely to reduce the immediate risk of harm?
- Could the intervention escalate the situation or cause greater harm?
- Where possible, have colleagues been alerted to support?

Is it proportionate?

- Is the least restrictive option being used?
- Is the intervention being applied for the shortest possible time?
- Is the approach escalating the situation?
- Have the student's personal characteristics (age, size, medical needs, SEND, vulnerabilities) been considered?
- Have equality duties been considered?

Have you considered the student's welfare and dignity?

Staff should consider the wider impact on the student, particularly where the student:

- has experienced trauma or adverse life events
- has communication needs
- has sensory sensitivities
- has medical conditions

Where possible, staff should:

- communicate calmly what is happening and why
- use appropriate verbal and/or non-verbal communication
- allow processing time
- maintain the student's dignity and privacy
- continually assess whether the intervention should continue, reduce or stop

Staff training should support confident professional judgement, including in situations requiring rapid decision-making.

APPENDIX 4: Consideration for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

Some students with SEND may display behaviours that challenge when experiencing distress, confusion, sensory overload, anxiety or pain. Students who are non-verbal or who have communication differences may express unmet needs through their behaviour.

School/Colleges must:

- create inclusive and enabling environments
- seek to understand underlying triggers
- implement proactive support strategies
- work collaboratively with students, parents and relevant professionals

Examples of proactive strategies include:

- reducing or removing distressing stimuli
- adopting appropriate body language and tone
- supporting emotional expression early
- offering regulating activities
- using familiar objects or interests to redirect attention

Staff should work collaboratively to develop a detailed understanding of students, collectively identifying patterns and risks. Careful observation should be used to anticipate needs and to implement proactive strategies that reduce or avoid incidents of distress, dysregulation and/or challenging behaviour.

Where staff identify an increased likelihood in the need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions, the school or college must have risk assessments in place and where possible, mitigate risks such as through training and prevention strategies. Whether the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate will depend on the circumstances, irrespective of whether it has been considered as part of a risk assessment.

APPENDIX 5: Risk Assessment Guidance

1. When to Use a Risk Assessment

If a student may require reasonable force or other restrictive interventions, create a Behaviour Support Plan (BSP) and risk assessment.

These tools help you identify risks, plan preventative strategies, and ensure staff are prepared.

2. Creating the Plan

- Work together: Involve the student, their parents/carers, and relevant professionals (teachers, pastoral staff, or health specialists).
- Be specific – clearly describe:
 - Any reasonable adjustments the student needs
 - Communication supports (visual cues, prompts, or alternative methods)
 - Situations where physical intervention may be necessary for safety

3. Preventative and Response Strategies

- Identify triggers and early warning signs that might lead to challenging behaviour.
- Agree on strategies to prevent escalation before it reaches a crisis.
- Clearly outline what staff should do if physical intervention is required, ensuring it is always lawful, necessary, and proportionate.

4. Working with Parents

- Seek agreement from parents/carers.
- Remember: Even if parents don't agree, staff still have the legal authority to act in the student's best interests.

5. Sharing and Using the Risk Assessment

- Make sure all relevant staff know and understand the risk assessment.
- Use the risk assessment as a day-to-day guide for supporting the student safely.

6. Reviewing the Risk Assessment

- Review the risk assessment at least every four-to-six weeks.
- Update it after any significant incident to ensure strategies are still effective and safe.