

USE OF REASONABLE FORCE AND RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS POLICY

Policy reviewed and agreed by Governing Body – July 2026

Date for next review – July 2027

Purpose and Strategic Context

This policy sets out the legal, ethical and professional framework for the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions within the school. It connects to our school values:

Respect:	At Edward Wilson, we conduct ourselves calmly and show respect to everyone. This approach is modelled by all staff. Nothing is more important to us than safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all pupils.
Community:	We are committed to protecting the safety and welfare of all pupils and staff.
Perseverance:	When something has gone wrong, we reflect and then move on. After a restrictive intervention, we conduct a debrief and act upon our reflections to reduce the necessity for another such incident.
Honesty:	We are a team of professionals with appropriate training in restrictive interventions, and we report incidents using the appropriate terms and processes with transparency and professional integrity.
Kindness:	We minimise the need for restrictive interventions through prevention, appropriate, timely support and agreed de-escalation strategies. We use the PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) approach with all pupils, adapting its use for pupils with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities).

Principles

This policy reflects our statutory duties under:

- Restrictive Interventions etc, Department for Education, 2026
- The Education and Inspections Act, 2006 (Sections 93 & 93A)
- Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974
- The Human Rights Act, 1998
- The Equality Act, 2010

As such, the use of force:

- Is a **last resort**
- **Never** used as a **punishment**
- **Necessary, Proportionate** and **Reasonable** in the circumstances
- Upholds the **dignity, wellbeing** and **rights** of the pupil at all times
- Begins, continues and ends with the **least restrictive option** in the circumstances
- Is reduced through our relational (PACE), trauma-informed approach to prevent its necessity

The school will not operate a 'no contact' policy, as this could prevent staff from fulfilling their duty of care.

Definitions of Terms in this Policy

Appropriate Physical Contact 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 and other restrictive interventions. This will depend on the circumstances, but examples of occasions when physical contact is generally appropriate include giving first aid, guiding or escorting pupils, comforting a distressed pupil, congratulating a pupil (e.g. a fist bump or pat on the back), demonstrating a technique or how to use equipment e.g. in PE or music. In assessing

whether physical contact is appropriate in a given situation, the member of staff should use their judgement, have regard to our Safeguarding Policy, the applicable circumstances (including whether there are other adults present), the pupil's age, and any other material factors. This includes, but is not limited to, whether the pupil has SEND or other vulnerabilities, and whether any alternative strategies which not include physical contact can be used.

Reasonable Force is a legal test, used to determine if force- usually a physical contact- used by staff to control or restrain a pupil's actions is justifiable under law. Force must be necessary and therefore used for the least amount of time. It must be proportionate to the circumstances it is attempting to prevent or stop.

Restraint is a form of restrictive intervention involving direct physical contact intended to prevent, restrict or subdue movement.

Restrictive Interventions are any planned or reactive action that limits a pupil's movement or freedom to act independently. This may include physical, mechanical, chemical or environmental restriction. A 'Plain English' definition is *an intervention by someone that prevents another person doing what they appear to want to do*.

Risk Assessment is a suitable and sufficient process for identifying hazards and judging the level of risk by weighing:

- Frequency (likelihood): how often the harmful event could happen, given the context and triggers
- Severity (impact): how serious the harm could be if it happens, for everyone affected

It then records the controls needed to reduce the risk to a level that is practicable, balancing the levels of risk against the time, effort and resources required to reduce it. Carrying out Risk Assessments is a duty under Health and Safety management regulations.

Significant Incident refers to any incident where the use of reasonable force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff.

Prevention and De-escalation (Main Approach)

Staff at Edward Wilson prioritises **prevention** of situations that may lead to the use of force.

Whole School Measures

We promote a positive behaviour culture, built on clear expectations and boundaries that are reinforced by all staff continually. Our shared language for the management of behaviour is detailed in our Behaviour Policy, as is our adaptations for children with SEND and other vulnerabilities (e.g. children on the Pastoral Register). We have predictable routines, a calm learning environment, and a model of what good order and discipline look like in practice. This is rooted in our vision and values and includes:

- An environment that minimises stressors and helps pupils regulate and engage
- Supervision in higher-risk spaces
- Therapeutic Plans (appendix in Behaviour Policy) and proactive adjustments for pupils who are more vulnerable to distress, sensory overload or anxiety
- Staff trained in de-escalation techniques, the PACE approach and trauma-informed practice
- The protective factor of strong and positive staff-pupil relationships
- High staff:pupil ratios
- Consistent systems that ensure staff responses are predictable and aligned across teams

Legal Powers

Under Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act (2006), all school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force. This includes:

- Teachers and support staff
- Any person authorised by the Headteacher

The school does not accept requests by parents or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions.

When Force May Be Used

Force may only be used to prevent a pupil from:

- Causing injury to themselves and others
- Committing a criminal offence
- Damaging property
- Seriously disrupting good order and discipline

The 'Reasonableness' Test

Staff must apply professional judgement using the following framework:

1. Necessity

- Is there an imminent risk of harm?
- Can the situation be de-escalated verbally?
- Can the team wait or withdraw from the situation?
- Are there any other viable options rather than use of force?

2. Proportionality

- A proportionate amount of force prevents a greater harm from occurring.

3. Welfare and Dignity

When making decisions about any physical contact, staff must actively consider the pupil's welfare and dignity throughout the incident. This means taking into account the pupil's age and size, any medical needs, any SEND, any known history of trauma, distress, or vulnerability that may affect how the pupil experiences the intervention.

Staff must also consider the pupil's **communication needs**. Where a pupil has speech, language and communication needs, is non-speaking, or has English as an additional language, staff should use clear, calm language and appropriate non-verbal strategies, and allow time for the pupil to process what is being communicated.

Where possible, staff should seek to maintain **respect** for a pupil's **dignity**. This may include:

- Considering the location and environment where any intervention is used e.g. in front of peers
- Explaining what is happening and why, in simple, respectful language, where appropriate
- Continuously monitoring the pupil's **wellbeing**, so the level of intervention can be reduced or stopped as soon as it is safe to do so

4. Consideration for Pupils with SEND

We recognise that pupils with SEND may be disproportionately affected by restrictive interventions and the use of reasonable force. We will identify and document individual triggers that increase the likelihood of distress or escalation using the Therapeutic Plan, including sensory overload, anxiety and pain, and will respond by putting preventative and proactive measures in place e.g. immediate dropping of demand. With vulnerable pupils, we will work in co-production with families, the pupil, and relevant professionals to agree supportive approaches and clear planning. The school will also ensure that reasonable adjustments are identified, implemented, and reviewed so that the pupil can be supported effectively and the need for intervention is reduced.

Therapeutic Plans include:

- Triggers and early warning signs
- De-escalation strategies that are known/believed to work
- Agreed responses
- Any agreed physical interventions

These are reviewed:

- At least annually in the Autumn parent/carer meeting
- After any significant incident
- After advice from external professionals

Training and Risk Assessment

Edward Wilson Primary School will:

- Ensure staff likely to use force are adequately trained in the safe and lawful use of restrictive interventions and in preventative strategies.
- Ensure training reflects the principles set out the DfE guidance, including preventions, de-escalation, and the safe and lawful use of force.
- Carry out risk assessments where there is foreseeable risk of intervention.
- Ensure staff understand:
 - Safe practice
 - Legal boundaries
 - De-escalation techniques

Prohibited Practices and Risk Management

Staff must never:

- Use force as a punishment
- Use any technique that restricts breathing or circulation
- Cover the mouth or nose
- Apply pressure to the neck, chest, abdomen or ribcage

High-Risk Positions:

- Prone restraint (face down) is prohibited
- Ground restraint must be avoided wherever possible

If a pupil is in contact on the ground unintentionally, staff must:

- Release or reposition immediately to a safer position (seated or standing)
- Assess the pupil's condition continuously

Risk Awareness (Breathing and Circulation):

Staff must be aware of the risks associated with restraint, including those related to breathing and circulation (sometimes referred to as positional asphyxia). Staff must:

- Monitor the pupil continuously
- Look for signs of distress (e.g. breathing difficulty, collapse, panic)
- Act immediately to reduce or stop the intervention if risk is identified. Staff must assess the situation continuously and reduce/cease the intervention as soon as it is safe to do so.

Use of Force for Searching

Force may be used to search a pupil, or their possessions, for **prohibited items only**, where there are reasonable grounds to suspect the pupil has such an item. This power applies to Headteachers and to staff members who Headteachers have authorised to carry out searches.

Staff must not use force to search for items that are banned under school rules only (e.g. squishies or mobile phones). Where a search is required, staff should follow the school's safeguarding procedures and have regard to relevant DfE guidance on searching, screening and confiscation.

Reporting of Incidents

This is a statutory requirement. All incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable after an event by the staff member/s involved. The requirement to record applies even if the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents/carers as part of a pupil's Therapeutic Plan. Our records include:

- Names of pupil/s and staff member/s directly involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including SEND and the pupil's SEN status code
- Time, date, location, and approximate length of time the intervention was used
- A brief account of the incident, including what led up to it, identified or possible triggers (if known), any preventative or de-escalation techniques used, what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of any physical injuries sustained
- A brief explanation of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance
- Any post-incident report, including any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

We use a Google Form for these incidents, which are monitored at least weekly by the Behaviour and Culture Lead.

The school may also record additional details to support evaluation and learning, for example the pupil's and witnesses' accounts, when and how parents/carers were notified, and what follow-up has taken place.

As a matter of good practice, we will also record non-force restrictive interventions where a pupil's freedom of movement or liberty is restricted beyond ordinary classroom management, in order to support monitoring, safeguarding and preventative practice.

Reporting to Parents/Carers

This is a statutory requirement. Parents/carers must be informed as soon as practicable, unless doing so would risk significant harm to the pupil. Reports will include:

- Time, date, location and duration
- Type of force used
- Any injuries
- Reason for use

The requirement to report to parents/carers applies even where the use of reasonable force is anticipated or agreed as part of a Therapeutic Plan. Where reporting to parents/carers is not appropriate, the incident will be reported to Westminster Local Authority.

Post-Incident Support and Review

Following any significant incident, we will take prompt action to support the wellbeing of the pupil, any staff involved, and the wider school community, and to reduce the likelihood of recurrence. The purpose of the post-incident process is to ensure any immediate health needs are met, that recording and reporting duties are fulfilled, and that the school learns from what happened in a way that protects dignity, rebuilds relationships, and strengthens preventative practice. As soon as practicable after the incident, Edward Wilson Primary School staff will consider whether the pupil or any member of staff requires a medical assessment or treatment for injury. All injuries are recorded on Medical Tracker, and escalated where required.

Support will be offered to the pupil, to any staff involved, and, where appropriate, to witnesses who may have been distressed by what they saw or heard. This support will be proportionate to need and may include:

- Reassurance
- Time and space to self- or co-regulate
- Restorative conversations (see Behaviour Policy)
- Additional pastoral or wellbeing support e.g. referral to Employee Assistance Programme or, for pupils, referrals to CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) or our art therapist

A **Debriefing Process** will be completed to support reflection and learning. Typically, this will be led by the Learning Mentor, Behaviour and Culture Lead, Pastoral Lead, SENDCo or Headteacher. This should include separate opportunities for the staff member/s involved and the pupil (where appropriate) to share their reflections. Where possible, the debrief should be facilitated by a member of staff who was not directly involved in the incident and may include an additional person to support impartiality. The debrief should focus on:

- What happened?
- What contributed to the escalation?
- What helped?
- What could be done differently in future?

Following the Debriefing Process, we will review any relevant Therapeutic Plans or other documents e.g. the SEND Suspension Document, where relevant. The review will identify preventative improvements, including adjustments to support strategies, environments, staffing and risk management measures, and we will ensure we communicate these changes to the relevant staff.

Monitoring and Governance

We will:

- Regularly review incident data to:
 - Identify patterns
 - Improve practice
 - Identify training needs
 - Monitor potential disproportionality
- Ensure compliance with statutory duties

An annual review will be conducted by the Headteacher and Governing Board.

Complaints and Allegations

Any concerns or complaints will be handled in line with the school's Complaints Policy and the DfE's Keeping Children Safe in Education. Allegations against staff will be managed in accordance with procedures in our Safeguarding Policy.

Further Details

Recording system used: CPOMS

Designated Safeguarding Leads: Helena Desmarais & Katy Lawrence

Training programme used: Dynamis

Number of staff with up-to-date training: 50