



Restrictive Interventions, Including the Use of Reasonable Force Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out St John Bosco College's approach to restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in line with Department for Education guidance effective from 1 April 2026.

The College is committed to maintaining a safe, calm and purposeful environment for all pupils and staff. Restrictive interventions will only be used when they are necessary, reasonable, proportionate in the circumstances, and for the minimum time necessary.

The College will seek to reduce the need for restrictive interventions through early support, prevention, de-escalation, reasonable adjustments, effective behaviour support planning and reflective post-incident review.

This policy aims to:

- safeguard the wellbeing of pupils and staff;
- clarify when restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, may be used;
- ensure that any use of force is lawful, reasonable, proportionate and necessary;
- ensure that pupils are treated with dignity and respect;
- support staff in responding safely and confidently to serious incidents;
- ensure that significant incidents are recorded, reported and reviewed appropriately;
- reduce the likelihood of future restrictive interventions through reflection, support and planning.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all members of staff working with pupils at St John Bosco College. This includes teachers, support staff, members of the Senior Leadership Team, pastoral staff, lunchtime staff, temporary staff, supply staff, volunteers and any other adults authorised by the Headteacher to have lawful control or charge of pupils.

The policy applies on the school site, during school activities, when pupils are under the lawful control or charge of staff, and during off-site visits, trips, fixtures or other school-related activities.

3. Legal Framework

The law allows members of school staff to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a pupil from:

- a) committing a criminal offence;
- b) causing personal injury to themselves or others;
- c) causing damage to property;
- d) engaging in behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline at the school or among pupils.

Staff may use reasonable force only where it is necessary and proportionate in the circumstances. Any use of force must be the minimum required to achieve the legitimate aim and must last for the shortest possible time.

Force must never be used as a punishment. It is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

Staff should not use force where doing so would be likely to make the situation more dangerous or place themselves, the pupil or others at unreasonable risk.

No member of staff is required to use physical intervention if they do not feel confident or able to do so safely. However, staff should take reasonable steps to keep pupils and others safe, including seeking assistance, removing other pupils from the area, using de-escalation strategies and alerting senior staff.

4. Key Definitions

Restrictive intervention

A restrictive intervention is an action that restricts a pupil's movement, liberty and/or freedom to act independently. This may include physical restraint, the use of reasonable force, seclusion, or other restrictive actions intended to prevent, restrict or subdue movement.

Reasonable force

Reasonable force is the use of no more force than is reasonable, necessary and proportionate in the circumstances. Reasonable force may be used to prevent injury, serious damage to property, a criminal offence, or serious disruption to good order and discipline.

Reasonable force may range from guiding a pupil to safety through to more direct physical intervention where there is a significant risk of harm or serious disruption.

Restraint

Restraint is a form of restrictive intervention involving direct physical contact where force is used to restrict a pupil's movement.

Seclusion

Seclusion is a form of restrictive intervention where a pupil is placed away from others and prevented from leaving, either through physical means, locked doors, barriers, or the implied threat of consequence if they leave.

Seclusion must only be used where it is necessary, reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances. It must not be used as a punishment, for staff convenience, or as a routine behaviour management strategy.

Handling / physical intervention

Handling refers to any physical intervention applied by a member of staff where it is necessary to make physical contact with a pupil in order to manage their conduct or ensure their own safety or the safety of others. Handling strategies may be restrictive or non-restrictive and may include shepherding, guiding, supporting, blocking, holding and, in the most serious cases, restraining.

Appropriate physical contact

Some physical contact with pupils is not a restrictive intervention. This may include providing first aid, offering comfort, guiding a pupil in ordinary circumstances, congratulating or encouraging a pupil where appropriate, or intervening in low-level contact where no force is used to restrict movement.

Significant incident

A significant incident is any incident where force, restraint, seclusion or another restrictive intervention is used and where the circumstances, level of risk, degree of force, duration, pupil vulnerability, injury, distress or complaint mean that it should be formally recorded and reported.

5. Principles

St John Bosco College will be guided by the following principles:

- restrictive interventions should be avoided wherever possible;
- prevention and de-escalation should always be attempted unless the urgency of the situation makes this impossible;
- any intervention must be necessary, reasonable and proportionate;
- the least restrictive option should be used;
- any use of force should be for the minimum time necessary;
- pupils should be treated with dignity and respect at all times;
- staff should seek adult assistance wherever possible;
- staff should continue to communicate calmly and clearly with the pupil;
- staff should consider the pupil's age, size, understanding, SEND, disability, trauma history, communication needs and any known vulnerabilities;
- the incident should be followed by support, reflection and review;
- significant incidents must be recorded and reported.

6. Preventing the Need for Restrictive Intervention

We will seek to minimise the need for restrictive interventions through:

- clear expectations and routines;
- consistent implementation of the Behaviour Policy;
- early identification of pupils who may require additional support;
- effective pastoral systems;
- use of behaviour support plans where appropriate;
- reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND or disabilities;
- use of de-escalation strategies;
- staff training;
- calm adult behaviour;

- safe management of the school environment;
- effective communication with parents/carers and external agencies where appropriate.

Where a pupil is known to present a higher risk of behaviours that may require physical intervention, the school will consider whether an individual plan is required. This may include:

- known triggers;
- early warning signs;
- successful de-escalation strategies;
- communication needs;
- sensory needs;
- trusted adults;
- reasonable adjustments;
- preferred approaches;
- strategies to avoid physical intervention;
- agreed responses if risk escalates;
- post-incident support.

Where appropriate, the pupil, parents/carers, SENDCo, pastoral staff, safeguarding staff and external professionals may contribute to this plan.

7. When reasonable force may be used

Reasonable force may be used to prevent a pupil from:

- hurting themselves;
- hurting another person;
- damaging property;
- committing a criminal offence;
- seriously disrupting good order and discipline.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- preventing a pupil from attacking another pupil or member of staff;
- intervening in a fight;
- preventing a pupil from causing serious damage to property;
- preventing a pupil from leaving a supervised area where doing so would place them at serious risk;
- preventing a pupil from harming themselves;

- removing a pupil from a situation where they are presenting a serious risk and have refused to follow reasonable instructions;
- preventing serious disruption where the behaviour is prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline.

The use of force must always be judged according to the particular circumstances of the incident.

8. When restrictive interventions must not be used

Restrictive interventions must not be used:

- as a punishment;
- to cause pain or humiliation;
- for staff convenience;
- as a substitute for good behaviour management;
- because a pupil is refusing to follow an instruction, unless their behaviour creates a risk that meets the legal threshold;
- in a way that deliberately restricts breathing;
- in a way that places pressure on the neck, throat, abdomen or chest;
- in a way that is likely to cause injury;
- in anger or frustration;
- for longer than necessary.

Staff must avoid any intervention that could compromise a pupil's airway, breathing or circulation.

If a pupil ends up on the ground, staff should seek to move the pupil to a safer position as quickly as possible, unless doing so would increase the risk of harm.

9. How to use reasonable force safely

Where physical intervention is necessary, staff should, wherever possible:

- remain calm;
- summon adult assistance;
- remove other pupils from the area where appropriate;
- clearly warn the pupil what may happen if they do not stop;
- give the pupil the opportunity to change their behaviour;
- explain what they are doing and why;
- use the minimum force necessary;
- use force for the minimum time necessary;
- avoid acting in anger or frustration;

- avoid responding to abusive or emotional language;
- use calm tone of voice and non-threatening body language;
- monitor the pupil's physical and emotional presentation;
- release the pupil as soon as it is safe to do so;
- ensure the pupil is supported after the incident;
- ensure staff involved are supported after the incident;
- complete the required recording and reporting processes.

There may be emergency situations where it is not possible to warn the pupil or seek assistance before intervening. In these circumstances, staff should act in a way that is reasonable and proportionate to the level of risk presented.

10. Seclusion

Seclusion is a restrictive intervention and must be treated seriously.

Seclusion must not be used as a punishment, for convenience, or as a routine behaviour management strategy.

If a pupil is placed away from others and prevented from leaving, either physically or through an implied consequence, this may constitute seclusion and must be recorded and reported where it is a significant incident.

Any use of seclusion must be:

- necessary;
- reasonable;
- proportionate;
- for the minimum time necessary;
- monitored appropriately;
- followed by support and review;
- recorded and reported in line with this policy.

A pupil must not be locked in a room alone. Any room used to support a pupil must be safe, suitable, appropriately supervised and used in a way that protects the pupil's dignity and welfare.

11. Staff Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for:

- reading and following this policy;
- using de-escalation strategies wherever possible;
- acting in the best interests of pupils;
- using reasonable force only where necessary and proportionate;
- seeking assistance where possible;

- reporting any incident involving restrictive intervention;
- recording incidents accurately and promptly;
- informing a member of the Senior Leadership Team;
- taking part in post-incident review where required.

12. Senior Leadership Responsibilities

The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for:

- ensuring staff understand this policy;
- ensuring staff receive appropriate guidance and training;
- supporting staff and pupils after incidents;
- ensuring significant incidents are recorded and reported;
- ensuring parents/carers are informed where required;
- reviewing incidents to identify patterns and reduce future risk;
- ensuring safeguarding concerns are referred appropriately;
- ensuring pupils with SEND or additional vulnerabilities are supported appropriately;
- reporting relevant information to governors.

13. Recording Restrictive Interventions

All significant incidents involving the use of force, restraint, seclusion or another restrictive intervention must be recorded.

The record should be completed as soon as practicable and ideally on the same school day by the member or members of staff involved.

The record should be uploaded to CPOMS and communicated to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

The record should include:

- the name of the pupil;
- the date, time and location of the incident;
- the names of staff involved;
- the names of witnesses;
- what was happening before the incident;
- what behaviour created the risk;
- what de-escalation strategies were attempted;
- why the restrictive intervention was necessary;
- what type of intervention was used;

- the degree of force used;
- the duration of the intervention;
- how the intervention ended;
- whether the pupil or any other person was injured;
- whether first aid or medical support was required;
- any follow-up actions required.

It is not necessary to record every incident of ordinary physical contact with a pupil. However, where a member of staff believes physical contact or intervention may be viewed negatively, or where there is any doubt, the incident should be recorded.

14. Informing Parents and Carers

Parents/carers should be informed of any significant incident involving the use of force, restraint, seclusion or another restrictive intervention as soon as practicable, normally on the same day.

This will usually be done in writing, for example by email or through the school's normal communication system. A phone call may also be appropriate depending on the circumstances.

Information shared with parents/carers should normally include:

- when and where the incident took place;
- why the intervention was necessary;
- what type of intervention was used;
- the duration of the intervention;
- whether the pupil was injured or distressed;
- what support has been offered;
- what follow-up will take place.

There may be exceptional circumstances where informing parents/carers immediately could create a safeguarding risk. In such cases, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Headteacher will decide how and when information should be shared, in line with safeguarding procedures.

15. Post-Incident Support and Review

Following any significant incident involving restrictive intervention, the school will ensure that appropriate support is offered to the pupil and staff involved.

This may include:

- checking for injury or distress;
- providing first aid or medical support where required;
- allowing the pupil time and space to calm;
- giving the pupil an opportunity to share their account;
- informing parents/carers;

- supporting staff involved;
- considering whether a restorative conversation is appropriate;
- reviewing what led to the incident;
- identifying whether earlier support or de-escalation could have reduced the risk;
- considering whether behaviour, pastoral, SEND or safeguarding plans need to be updated;
- considering whether external agency support is required.

The purpose of post-incident review is not simply to decide whether the use of force was justified, but to reduce the likelihood of similar incidents happening again.

16. Pupils with SEND, Disabilities or Additional Vulnerabilities

The College recognises that some pupils may have additional needs, disabilities, communication needs, sensory needs, trauma-related needs or other vulnerabilities that may affect their behaviour and their response to adult intervention.

Staff should take account of:

- SEND;
- disability;
- medical needs;
- communication needs;
- sensory needs;
- mental health needs;
- trauma or adverse childhood experiences;
- safeguarding concerns;
- age, size and understanding;
- known triggers;
- reasonable adjustments.

For pupils with known needs, staff should follow agreed plans wherever possible. Plans should be reviewed following any significant incident to consider whether additional support, adjustments or external advice are required.

The use of restrictive intervention should not be a substitute for making reasonable adjustments or providing appropriate support.

17. Safeguarding

Any restrictive intervention may raise safeguarding considerations. Staff should remain alert to the possibility that behaviour may be linked to abuse, neglect, exploitation, trauma, unmet need or emotional distress.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed where:

- the incident raises a safeguarding concern;
- the pupil is already known to safeguarding staff;
- there is an injury;
- the pupil makes an allegation;
- the use of force may have caused significant distress;
- the incident involved seclusion;
- there are concerns about staff conduct;
- external agency advice may be required.

Where appropriate, the DSL will inform relevant agencies or authorities in accordance with statutory guidance and local safeguarding procedures.

18. Complaints and Allegations

Any complaint or allegation arising from the use of reasonable force, restraint, seclusion or another restrictive intervention will be taken seriously and managed in line with the school's complaints, safeguarding and staff conduct procedures.

For the safeguarding of both staff and pupils, any subsequent investigation should normally be undertaken by a member of staff other than the person who applied the physical intervention.

Accurate and timely recording is essential to protect pupils, staff and the school.

19. Monitoring and Governance

The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team will monitor the use of restrictive interventions in school.

The school will review records to identify:

- patterns involving individual pupils;
- repeated triggers;
- repeated locations or times of day;
- whether additional staff training is needed;
- whether behaviour systems are working effectively;
- whether reasonable adjustments are required;
- whether pupils with SEND, disabilities or other vulnerabilities are disproportionately affected;
- whether any protected groups are disproportionately affected;
- whether further support or external advice is required.

Anonymised information about the use of restrictive interventions will be reported to governors at appropriate intervals. Governors will use this information to provide oversight and assurance that the school is acting lawfully, safely and proportionately, and that leaders are taking steps to reduce the need for restrictive interventions.

20. Staff Training

The school will ensure that staff receive appropriate information, guidance and training in relation to:

- this policy;
- the legal framework for reasonable force;
- prevention and de-escalation;
- safeguarding;
- SEND and reasonable adjustments;
- recording and reporting requirements;
- post-incident support and review.

Where specific pupils present known risks, relevant staff will be made aware of agreed support plans and strategies.

21. Appropriate and Inappropriate Intervention

Examples of intervention that may be appropriate, depending on the circumstances, include:

- interposing a member of staff's body between pupils;
- blocking a pupil's path where necessary and safe;
- guiding a pupil away from danger;
- leading a pupil by the hand or arm where appropriate;
- shepherding a pupil away from a situation;
- holding a pupil where necessary to prevent harm;
- using minimum force for minimum duration.

The following must not be used:

- force as a punishment;
- any hitting, kicking, punching or deliberate infliction of pain;
- any intervention that restricts breathing;
- any intervention that places pressure on the neck, throat, chest or abdomen;
- any arm, leg, throat or finger locks;
- any hold that results in a pupil being deliberately placed face down on the ground;
- the seated double embrace;

- the double basket-hold;
- the nose distraction technique;
- any intervention designed to humiliate, degrade or cause unnecessary pain;
- any intervention used in anger or frustration.

22. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are changes to national guidance, legislation, safeguarding requirements or local procedures.

The policy will also be reviewed where monitoring indicates that changes are needed to improve pupil safety, staff confidence, recording, reporting or the reduction of restrictive interventions.

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Publication status: Website/SharePoint	To FGB 09/07/26
Named SLT owner (initials):	MBA

Appendix A

Guidance on appropriate and inappropriate intervention: how can you intervene – examples include:

- interposing of restrainer's
- body
- blocking a pupil's path
- holding
- leading by hand or arm
- shepherding with hand placed in the small of the back
- minimum force/minimum duration

You cannot:

- use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.
- use the 'seated double embrace' which involves two members of staff forcing a person into a sitting position and leaning them forward, while a third monitors breathing;
- use the 'double basket-hold' which involves holding a person's arms across their chest;
- use the 'nose distraction technique' which involves a sharp upward jab under the nose.
- use any hitting, kicking or punching
- deliberately inflict pain
- restrict breathing
- use any arm, leg, throat, finger locks or holds that result in pupils being put face down on the ground