



RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS POLICY (INCLUDING USE OF REASONABLE FORCE)

1. Introduction and Purpose

Abingdon Foundation seeks to provide an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect in Abingdon School and Abingdon Prep School within which learning and personal development can be fostered. To create such an atmosphere, it is vitally important that, as a community, the schools nurture positive and supportive relationships between pupils, and between staff and pupils.

The use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, can have a significant impact on the pupils, staff members and parents involved, as well as the wider classroom. However, there are times when the use of restrictive interventions will be lawful and necessary; for example, to keep individual pupils and the wider school community safe.

The school will proactively minimise the need to use restrictive interventions through **early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies**. The school will enable staff to feel more confident in knowing how to use these interventions safely, appropriately and lawfully.

This policy is intended to clarify when such occasions might occur and the procedures that should be adopted in these circumstances.

2. Relevant Legislation and Policy

This policy has been created in accordance with the [Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools guidance April 2026](#) which provides statutory guidance under the *Education and Inspections Act 2006* outlining when teachers and other staff who have lawful controls of pupils are permitted to use reasonable force.

Abingdon Foundation is committed to ensuring that the application of this policy is non-discriminatory in line with the *Equality Act 2010* and is in accordance with the *Human Rights Act 1998*.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Foundation's [Safeguarding Policy](#) and [Staff Code of Conduct](#).

3. Scope

This policy applies to **both Abingdon School and Abingdon Prep School**.

It applies to all staff including employees and self-employed staff (for example sports coaches or visiting music teachers).

4. Terminology

For clarity, this policy uses the following definitions:

- **Restrictive intervention:** a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This is used as an umbrella term for both physical and non-physical actions aimed at restraining pupils (e.g. holding a pupil's arms, blocking a pupil's path, physically interposing between pupils).
- **Reasonable force:** a term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. "Reasonable" means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances, including the age, physical size and understanding of the pupil.
- **Significant incident:** any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact as described in Section 8. *Other Physical Contact with Pupils* within this policy and set out in the [Staff Code of Conduct](#). This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.
- **Seclusion:** a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and preventing them from leaving by physical obstruction, blocking (or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave).
- **Restraint:** a term used in legislation for a non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact (e.g. both holding a pupil's arms or removing a pupil's crutches would both be considered forms of restraint).

5. Who Can Use Reasonable Force?

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in **certain circumstances**.

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

- Causing injury to themselves or others.
- Committing a criminal offence.
- Damaging property.
- Causing disorder among pupils, whether during a teaching session or otherwise (e.g. school event, trip or visit).

Any use of force which is not to prevent immediate risk of harm (injury, damage, disorder) to a person or property may render the member of staff liable to disciplinary action.

Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions should be adequately trained in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies.

The Head of Abingdon Prep School or the Head of Abingdon School, with the advice of the Foundation Safeguarding Committee, will decide and review regularly which staff should undertake training and what form that training should take.

The school will carry out risk assessments to ensure that staff who regularly work alongside pupils where such interventions may be required can do so as safely as possible, in line with the duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees.

There may be occasions, for example, when dealing with older or physically large or strong pupils or more than one pupil, when staff should not intervene without help (unless it is an emergency) if it poses a risk of serious harm to them. Members of staff should not put their own safety at risk.

6. Use of Reasonable Force to Search Pupils

Authorised staff can also use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for "prohibited items" as defined in the respective school's Search Policy ([Abingdon School](#), [Abingdon Prep School](#)) but not to search for items banned under the school rules only.

7. Unacceptable Uses of Force

It is always unlawful to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment.

The use of force can be dangerous, particularly where it occurs on the ground. If a pupil 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.

Pupils should not be restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation, for example, by covering the mouth and/or nose, or applying pressure to the neck region or abdomen.

Where appropriate, the pupil should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible.

It is recognised that for any form of restraint, including seated and standing, there is a risk of physical and psychological harm, and it should be avoided wherever possible.

Staff must not intentionally touch or hold a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent, such as contact with genitalia.

8. Other Physical Contact with Pupils

There are circumstances where 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. Further information on this is included in the [Staff Code of Conduct](#).

Examples include:

- Giving first aid or medical treatment.
- Guiding or escorting pupils (e.g. APS staff holding the hand of a pupil at the front/back of the line when going to assembly, when walking together around the school or on a school trip, or when helping a pupil to a self-regulation space).
- Comforting a distressed pupil (e.g. putting an arm around with consent).
- Congratulating or praising a pupil (e.g. a pat on the back or handshake).
- Demonstrating how to use a musical instrument or technical instruction (e.g. adjusting arm or hand position).
- Demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE or sports coaching (e.g. adjusting posture for safety).

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

- the Foundation's [Safeguarding Policy](#) and [Staff Code of Conduct](#).
- the applicable circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present.
- the individual pupil's age.
- any other material factors, including but not limited to whether:
 - the pupil has SEND or other vulnerabilities.
 - any alternative strategies that do not include physical contact can be used.

Physical contact should **never** be in secret.

Staff should consult with the relevant Deputy Head Pastoral if they need advice regarding physical contact.

9. Determining When Use of Restrictive Interventions is Appropriate

The decision to physically intervene relies on professional judgment based on the individual circumstances. To make this assessment, the member of staff should consider the following:

Is it Necessary?

- Are there other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage the situation?
- Is the intervention likely to reduce risk successfully, or will its use escalate the situation and cause more harm?

Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.

Is it Proportionate?

- Staff must use the least amount of force for the least amount of time required.
- The degree of force must be in proportion to the seriousness of the behavior or the consequences it is trying to prevent.
- If the intervention escalates the situation, staff should reconsider their approach.

Staff should consider the personal circumstances of the pupil such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.

What is the Impact on Pupil Welfare?

- Staff should consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. For example, pupils may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing if they:
 - have diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments;
 - have experienced an adverse life event;
 - have experienced past trauma or neglect;
 - have communication difficulties or other needs.

- Staff should seek to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity. This may include, where possible, considering the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.
- Staff should always maintain a calm and measured approach.
- Where practicable, a verbal warning should precede the action.
- Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and explain what the pupil needs to do.
- For pupils with difficulties with speech, language and communication, or with English as an additional language, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies should be used to ensure the pupil understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.
- 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.

This list of factors is not exhaustive, and staff should also take into account other relevant considerations.

Any physical force or restrictive intervention should stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary.

10. Consideration for Pupils with SEND

Some children and young people with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. This can lead to pupils with SEND being disproportionately subject to the use of restrictive interventions.

The School will seek to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour so that staff can provide proactive support, create an inclusive environment and consider the impact of school policies on pupils with SEND. This may include, where possible, utilising 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.

Prevention and De-escalation

Staff will also work with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies. This may include (though this list is not exhaustive):

- removing stimuli that may be causing distress
- changing body language, facial expression, and/or tone of voice
- supporting the pupil to express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- engaging the pupil in an activity which can help them manage their feelings of anxiety
- distracting the pupil in something that interests them or by introducing familiar objects and activities to redirect their attention

Where appropriate, staff will work with pupils with SEND and their parents in the production of any necessary **behaviour support plans**. Behaviour support plans will outline any adjustments, such as to address aspects of the school environment which the pupil finds challenging and ways for pupils

to communicate their needs effectively. Behaviour support plans should detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil. This will be discussed in conjunction with the relevant people, such as teachers, parents, the pupil, pastoral staff or health professionals, and parameters around its use stated clearly in the plan. Where there is an identified risk, such as increased likelihood in the need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions, the school will put a risk assessment 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 behaviour support plan. Any behaviour support plans will be reviewed with the pupil and their parent periodically and following any significant incident, so that changes can be made based on evidence of what has worked and what has not worked in practice for the individual pupil.

Disability

Where a pupil has a disability, the school has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to take reasonable steps to avoid disadvantage so that the pupil can fully participate in the education provided by the school, and that they can enjoy the other benefits, facilities and services that the school provides for pupils.

11. Pupil and Staff Support

The school will evaluate all incidents to understand:

- why the restrictive intervention was used;
- the impact on staff and pupils;
- Any patterns or trends; and
- how to avoid future occurrences (for example amending or introducing a behaviour support plan).

Medical Assessment

If appropriate, pupils and staff involved will receive a medical assessment and treatment for injuries as soon as possible and this will be recorded/logged.

Follow-up

The Head (or a member of the school's Leadership Team on the Head's behalf) will hold follow-up conversations with all involved to support pupil and staff wellbeing and facilitate reflection and learning.

The school will continue to monitor staff and pupil wellbeing and, if needed, will provide additional support if needed, for example, follow-up conversations, access to counselling or other resources.

Other pupils or staff who witnessed an incident of restrictive intervention where a pupil or staff member may have been injured or become distressed will also be provided with appropriate support where necessary.

Communication with parents

The Head will be responsible for determining how any significant incidents will be communicated to the parents of the pupil involved. This will be as soon as practicable after the incident and the Head will generally endeavour to do this no later than the same day. Usually, this information will be communicated to parents in writing.

The report given to parents should usually include:

- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention.
- A brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance.
- A brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force.
- Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable.

This will apply even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances has been agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

Where appropriate, parents will be invited to have a follow-up discussion about the incident which may include:

- any behavioural triggers or warning signs of an impending incident.
- what de-escalation strategies were used and how effective they were.
- what might be done differently in the future.

The school may use this information to amend any existing behaviour support plans, as needed.

12. Recording and Reporting

Incidents where force, seclusion or non-force related restraint were used must be recorded.

Incidents must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable after the event. They should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

For incidents at Abingdon Prep School, staff will complete a google form to report.

Incidents at Abingdon School must be recorded on CPOMs and the DSL (or a DDSL) will add to the DSL Restraint log.

The incident will be recorded even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

The record should include the following details as a minimum:

- names of pupil and staff directly involved (these should be in full, not using initials or first names only).
- any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and a brief outline of this.
- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention.
- brief account of the incident, including:
 - what led up to the incident;

- identified or potential triggers if known;
- any preventative or de-escalation strategies used; and (where relevant)
- what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of any physical injuries sustained
- brief account of why the use of force or intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance.
- any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts.

The following should also be recorded:

- witness statements from staff and/or pupils if appropriate.
- when and how parents were notified.
- what follow up action has taken place.

13. Review

The Foundation's School Leadership Teams and the Foundation Safeguarding Committee will regularly review records of restrictive interventions. Governors will review logs and receive written summaries termly.

Reviews will:

- identify and implement improvements to policies and practices.
- identify areas of learning and development for school staff.
- understand pupils' repeat patterns and triggers to interrogate the effectiveness of pupil support measures, share this information with teachers who work with those pupils to better support them and, where appropriate, their parents, to establish a behaviour support plan or revise an existing plan.
- identify any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to pupils who share protected characteristics, have SEND, or other types of vulnerability.

14. Complaints and Allegations

Any complaints regarding the use of restrictive interventions should be dealt with in accordance with the School's 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 *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and the Foundation's [Disciplinary Procedure](#) should be followed. This includes the provisions regarding suspension of staff.

If the force used is in line with this policy, is **reasonable and proportionate** and for the legitimate purposes set out in section 5. above and is carried out with regard to the pupil's welfare, staff have a robust defense against allegations of inappropriate use.

Senior Deputy Head (APS)
Deputy Head Pastoral (AS)

Last Internal Review: April 2026

Last Governor review: Summer Term 2026
Next Governor review: Summer Term 2027