



Priory Junior School
Restrictive Interventions and Use of Reasonable Force
Policy

Spring 2026

Date approved by Governing Body/Committee	
Signed by Chair of Governors	
Signed by Headteacher	
Date of next review	Spring 2027

This policy sets out how Priory Junior School minimises and manages the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, to keep pupils and staff safe. It should be read alongside the school's behaviour regulation, safeguarding/child protection, SEND, health and safety, and complaints policies.

It is important to set out from the outset that this policy is not to remove all physical contact between adults and children in school. Physical contact between adults and children is part of practice that happens in our school but this policy outlines below what this should look like to provide clarity for parents/carers around how staff keep pupils and staff safe.

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances. To prevent or stop a pupil from:

1. causing injury to themselves or others
2. committing a criminal offence
3. damaging property
4. causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

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. We trust school leaders to make decisions on training based on their school's individual contexts and needs. When deciding what formal staff training is required, school leaders should ensure that the chosen training reflects the principles of this guidance.

Employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees. Therefore, schools should 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

Further information should be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6943dad6501cdd438f4cf5aa/Restrictive_interventions_including_use_of_reasonable_force_in_schools.pdf

Use of reasonable force to search pupils

Head teachers and staff they authorise have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item. A member of staff can use such force as is reasonable to search for legally prohibited items, but not to search for items banned under the school rules only. Staff should refer to the Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools guidance document for detailed advice on searching a pupils.

1. Principles and aims

At Priory Junior School, our approach to behaviour is relational, restorative and trauma-informed. We prioritise de-escalation, co-regulation and repair of relationships, so that physical intervention is avoided wherever possible. Any restrictive intervention must be a last resort and used only to prevent harm.

- to ensure the safety, wellbeing and dignity of pupils, staff and visitors
- to minimise the need for restrictive interventions through early support, prevention and de-escalation
- to ensure that any use of reasonable force is lawful, proportionate and for the least amount of time
- to ensure incidents are recorded, reported and reviewed in line with statutory duties
- to support pupils and staff after incidents, including restoring relationships and learning from events.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all school staff (including supply staff) and to anyone working under the supervision of school staff. It applies on the school site and during any school activity off-site, including educational visits.

3. Key definitions

Restrictive intervention: Any action (physical or non-physical) to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of a pupil's body or part of their body.

Reasonable force: A legal term covering physical restrictive interventions. 'Reasonable' means no more force than is necessary, used for the least amount of time, depending on the circumstances.

Significant incident: Any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff.

Seclusion: A non-disciplinary intervention: keeping a pupil confined 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 non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises a pupil or limits movement, with or without direct physical contact.

4. Legal framework and guidance

This policy is informed by Department for Education guidance 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools' (April 2026). The main legislation includes:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (especially sections 93 and 93A)
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010

5. Appropriate physical contact

Physical contact is often necessary and appropriate in a primary school and does not automatically constitute 'reasonable force'. Examples include:

- giving first aid
- guiding or escorting pupils (for example, holding a hand when moving around school or on visits)
- comforting a distressed pupil (with due regard to safeguarding considerations)
- congratulating or praising a pupil (e.g., a handshake)
- demonstrating techniques during PE or practical lessons

Staff must exercise professional judgement and have regard to safeguarding expectations, the context (including whether other adults are present), and the pupil's age, needs and vulnerabilities.

6. Preventing the need for restrictive interventions

The school's behaviour regulation approach (including co-regulation strategies, restorative practice and reasonable adjustments) is the first line of support. Whole-school measures include:

- a calm, predictable and inclusive environment
- consistent routines and proactive behaviour teaching
- de-escalation strategies (tone of voice, PACE/empathy, offering choices, time/space to regulate)
- strong staff-pupil relationships and trusted adults
- individual behaviour support plans and risk assessments where needed
- analysis of incident data to identify patterns and reduce triggers.

7. When reasonable force may be used

All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- causing injury to themselves or others
- committing a criminal offence
- damaging property

- causing disorder among pupils at the school.

Reasonable force must never be used as a punishment.

8. Decision-making: assessing whether an intervention is reasonable

Staff must make a rapid, professional judgement based on the specific circumstances. Before using a restrictive intervention (or while it is ongoing), staff should consider:

Necessity

- Are there other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage the situation?
- Is the intervention likely to reduce risk, or could it escalate the situation or cause more harm?
- Where possible, communicate with other staff to understand wider risks.

Proportionality

- Use the least amount of force / least restrictive intervention for the least amount of time.
- If the intervention escalates the situation, reconsider and attempt an alternative strategy.
- Consider the pupil's personal circumstances (medical conditions, SEND, age/size) and equality implications.

Welfare and dignity

- Consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare (including trauma, sensory needs or communication difficulties).
- Maintain respect for the pupil's dignity (including, where possible, the location and who is present).
- Communicate calmly what is happening, why, and what the pupil needs to do to be safe.

9. Unacceptable and high-risk practices

The following are not permitted:

- any use of force as punishment
- restraint that affects a pupil's airway, breathing or circulation (e.g., covering mouth/nose; pressure to neck region or abdomen)
- deliberately taking a pupil to the ground; any unintentional ground holding must be ended or made safer as quickly as possible
- methods that are intended to cause pain, humiliation, fear or distress
- seclusion used as a disciplinary response or through threat of punishment.

10. Seclusion

Seclusion should only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation, and is not acting with intent. If seclusion is used:

- the space must be safe and not feel threatening
- the pupil must be supervised at all times
- the pupil must be allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced
- the incident must be recorded and reported in line with this policy.

11. Pupils with SEND and other vulnerabilities

The school recognises that pupils with SEND may be disproportionately subject to restrictive interventions. Staff should seek to understand underlying triggers (e.g., pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar situations, fear/anxiety, communication needs) and provide proactive, inclusive support.

Where appropriate:

- behaviour support plans should be co-produced with pupils and parents and reviewed regularly, including after any significant incident
- plans should set out reasonable adjustments, early support strategies and (where relevant) parameters for increased physical contact
- risk assessments must be in place where there is an identified risk of restrictive interventions being needed.

12. Training, support and risk assessment

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring staff have appropriate training and support. This includes:

- whole-school training on prevention, de-escalation and trauma-informed practice
- additional training for staff who are more likely to need to use restrictive interventions
- risk assessments for staff working with pupils where force or other restrictive interventions may be required
- supporting staff decision-making during and after incidents.

13. Recording and reporting

The school will record and report incidents in line with statutory duties (section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025), as reflected in DfE guidance effective from April 2026.

13.1 Recording significant incidents involving use of force

A written record must be completed as soon as practicable (no later than the same day where possible) by the staff member(s) involved. As a minimum, the record must include:

- names of the pupil and staff directly involved
- relevant needs or circumstances, including SEND status code where applicable
- time, date, location and approximate duration
- brief account of what happened, triggers, prevention/de-escalation used, and (where relevant) what type/degree of force was applied and any injuries

- why force was assessed as necessary
- any post-incident support/medical treatment.

13.2 Reporting significant incidents involving use of force

Parents must be informed in writing as soon as practicable (endeavouring to do so the same day). Reports to parents should include, as a minimum:

- time, date, location and approximate duration
- why the intervention was assessed as necessary
- what type/degree of force was applied
- details of any physical injuries (if applicable).

Best practice includes inviting parents to a follow-up discussion (where appropriate) to identify triggers, review behaviour support plans, evaluate de-escalation, and agree future support.

13.3 Recording and reporting seclusion and non-force related restraint

Each incident of seclusion or restraint (including restraint without direct physical contact) must be recorded and reported as soon as practicable (endeavouring to do so the same day). Records must include, as a minimum:

- names of the pupil and staff directly involved
- time, date, location and approximate duration
- relevant needs/circumstances including SEND status code where applicable
- why the intervention was assessed as necessary
- details of injuries (if applicable)
- post-incident support/medical treatment.

For maintained schools, parents must be supplied with a copy of the written record. For other school types, parents must receive written information about the incident. If an incident of restraint also constitutes a significant use of force, the school will follow the significant incident (force) reporting procedure to avoid duplicate reporting.

14. Post-incident actions and support

After any incident involving restrictive intervention:

- check for and respond to injuries; seek medical assessment where appropriate
- record injuries and report to the Health and Safety Executive where required
- hold a debrief/follow-up conversation to reflect, learn and restore relationships (ideally facilitated by an adult not directly involved)
- consider whether the incident indicates a need to amend a behaviour support plan, risk assessment or reasonable adjustments
- monitor wellbeing of the pupil, staff involved and any pupils who witnessed the incident; provide additional support where needed.

15. Governance, monitoring and review

The Governing Body will ensure that procedures are in place and complied with, and will regularly review data on restrictive interventions to:

- identify and implement improvements to policy and practice
- identify staff learning and development needs
- understand patterns/triggers for individual pupils and strengthen support
- identify any disproportionate use in relation to protected characteristics or SEND and take action.

16. Complaints and allegations

Complaints about restrictive interventions should follow the school's complaints procedure. Any allegation about inappropriate use of force or restrictive interventions against a member of staff will be managed in line with the school's safeguarding procedures and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Appendix A: Quick reference (staff)

Use the following steps:

1. De-escalate and seek support early (use calm voice, space, choices, co-regulation).
2. Only consider restrictive intervention if necessary to prevent injury/crime/property damage/disorder.
3. Use the least restrictive option for the least amount of time; stop/reduce as soon as risk reduces.
4. Do not use prohibited/high-risk holds (airway/breathing/circulation/neck/abdomen; punishment).
5. Afterwards: check injuries, restore relationships, record and report (same day where possible).

Appendix B: Recording proforma (template)

Schools may adapt this template to match their systems (e.g., CPOMS).

Type of incident	Significant use of force / Seclusion / Restraint (incl. without physical contact)
Pupil name / DOB / class	
Staff directly involved	
Date / time / location	
Approx. duration	
Brief account (including triggers, de-escalation attempted)	
Why intervention was necessary	
What was done (type/degree of force if relevant)	
Injuries / medical support / follow-up	

References

- Department for Education (2026). Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (Guidance for schools in England, effective from April 2026).
- Department for Education (2013). Use of reasonable force in schools (effective until 31 March 2026).
- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (sections 93 and 93A).
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025.