



The Rivers
C.of E. Academy Trust

Restrictive Intervention Policy

Committee	Executive Team
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Officer Responsible	Director of Inclusion

This document sets out the regulations for the MAT and all member academies

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Introduction

The Rivers C.of E Academy Trust strives to create a secure and supportive environment for all pupils and staff. There are times when the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, is lawful and necessary to maintain safety. However, we understand that the use of restrictive interventions can have a significant impact on pupils, staff and parents/carers. Restrictive Interventions are only ever considered as a last resort, once all other prevention and de-escalation strategies have been exhausted as identified in our Behaviour Policy.

This policy aims to:

- Minimise the need to use restrictive interventions, through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies
- Help school staff feel confident in knowing how to use restrictive interventions safely, appropriately and lawfully, when they are necessary
- Clearly set out the steps for recording and reporting incidents of reasonable force, seclusion and restraint
- Protect the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all pupils and staff, and help create a positive and safe place for everyone at school

Legislation

The Rivers CofE Academy Trust is committed to ensuring that all schools operate within the law. This policy is based on the Department for Education (DfE) [guidance on restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools](#).

It also meets the requirements of:

- [Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [Section 550ZA](#) and [section 550ZB](#) of the Education Act 1996
- [The Equality Act 2010](#) (including the Public Sector Equality Duty)
- [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)
- [Human Rights Act 1998](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [The Schools \(Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint\) \(No. 2\) \(England\) Regulations 2025](#)
- Department for Education guidance on [searching, screening and confiscation](#)
- Paragraph 16A of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (inserted by [The Schools \(Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint\) \(No. 2\) \(England\) Regulations 2025](#))

This policy also complies with The Rivers C.of E. Academy Trust's Articles of Association and the Funding Agreement of each setting within the trust.

Definitions

Restrictive interventions

Used to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body or part of the body. This policy uses "restrictive interventions" as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways.

Reasonable force

Refers to the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to restrain pupils, using no more force than is needed for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

Examples of reasonable force could include:

- Breaking up a fight between pupils
- Redirecting a pupil who is running towards danger (e.g. a busy road)

Significant incident

Refers to any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between a member of staff and a pupil (see "Appropriate Physical Contact with Pupils" on page 5 for further information).

Seclusion

A non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil 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.

An example of seclusion could include:

- Adult supervision of a pupil in a quiet room away from others, where the pupil is prevented from leaving for their own safety and/or the safety of others

Restraint

A non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact.

Examples of restraint could include:

- A staff member holding a pupil's arms when the pupil is attempting to harm themselves or others
- Removing a piece of equipment required for mobility (e.g. crutches)

Roles and Responsibilities

Governance

- The Safeguarding Link Trustee will approve the Rivers C.of E. Academy Trust 's Restrictive Intervention Policy.
- Trustees will ensure that a procedure is in place for recording and reporting each:
 - Significant incident involving force
 - Seclusion incident
 - Restraint incident
- Trustees will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the procedures for recording and reporting the use of force, seclusion and restraint are followed.
- Trustees will regularly review and interrogate data on the use of restrictive interventions.

The Role of The Trust

The trust central team will:

- Ensure that appropriate and high-quality training on preventative strategies and the safe and lawful use of restrictive interventions is provided for staff who need it, based on individual school context and need.
- Provide support and challenge where changes may be needed to practice. For example:
 - If approaches have been used for some time but have not been effective.
 - If there is any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions, including in relation to pupils who share protected characteristics or have SEND/other vulnerabilities.

The Role of the Headteacher

The headteacher will:

- Maintain overall responsibility for the implementation and oversight of this policy.
- Ensure adequate staffing levels to support positive behaviour management.
- Monitor incidents involving restrictive interventions, including a regular review of incidents to refine and improve process.
- Ensure compliance with recording and reporting requirements.
- Authorise staff to search a pupil or their belongings if they have good reason to think the pupil has a prohibited or banned item.
- Follow the statutory safeguarding guidance (Keeping Children Safe in Education) if an allegation regarding inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive intervention is made against a member of staff.

The Role of all staff

All members of staff are responsible for:

- Making sure they have read and understood the principles of this policy and any other linked policies.

- Using de-escalation techniques and positive behaviour management strategies to try to minimise and prevent the need for restrictive interventions.
- Accurately recording every seclusion incident, restraint incident and significant incident involving force that they are involved in and reporting these to the Headteacher and DSL.
- Recording any injuries that occur as part of an incident involving restrictive intervention.
- Taking part in training on preventative strategies and the safe and lawful use of restrictive interventions, if relevant to their role (this may include additional training appropriate to their responsibilities).
- Engaging in follow-up conversation(s) to debrief and reflect on incidents involving a restrictive intervention that they were involved in, to help us understand what happened and why.

The Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL is responsible for:

- Ensuring adequate recording takes place via the school's safeguarding reporting software.
- Ensuring records are kept securely and in accordance with safeguarding and data protection procedures.
- Contacting the local authority in cases where informing a pupil's parent/carers of the use of reasonable force, seclusion or restraint on their child would put that child at risk of significant harm.

Physical Contact with Pupils

The Rivers C.of E. Academy Trust does not have a "no contact" policy. Schools will not grant any requests by parents/carers or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions.

There 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 or other restrictive interventions.

Examples include:

- Providing first aid to a pupil.
- Providing intimate care (e.g. toileting or supporting medical needs).
- Guiding or escorting a pupil through the school building or on a school trip by holding their hand.
- Comforting a pupil who is upset.
- Offering congratulations or praise (e.g. high five or handshake).
- Demonstrating the use of equipment (e.g. musical instruments or science equipment).
- When demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching.

In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in any given situation, staff should use their professional judgement, and have regard to:

- The school's child protection and safeguarding policy
- The specific circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present
- Additional factors including (but not limited to):
 - The pupil's age.
 - Any known vulnerabilities, including whether the pupil has special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).
 - Whether any alternative strategies that don't involve physical contact can be used.

Acceptable use of force

All school staff have legal power to use reasonable force in certain situations. Staff can use reasonable force to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- Hurting themselves or others.
- Committing a criminal offence.
- Damaging property.
- Causing disorder among pupils, in or out of lessons.

While all staff have this power, some staff, especially those who work closely with pupils who might show challenging behaviour, are more likely to need to use it than others.

We will ensure staff are adequately trained and that risk assessments are carried out where necessary.

Any significant incident involving the use of force will be recorded and reported in accordance with the procedures in this policy.

Unacceptable use of force

It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment. We never use force as a sanction, threat or deterrent.

Our staff understand that any form of force or restraint carries a risk of physical and psychological harm, so we always avoid using these measures where possible.

The following uses of force are never acceptable:

- Staff using force for the purpose of punishment.
- Staff restraining a pupil in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation, for example by covering their nose and/or mouth or applying pressure to their neck or abdomen.
- Staff using force on the ground. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their hold or move into a safer position as quickly as possible.

Using reasonable force to search pupils

The headteacher, and any member of staff authorised by the headteacher, have a statutory power to search a pupil or their belongings if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item, (as listed in the DfE's searching, screening and confiscation guidance) or an item banned under school rules.

- They can use reasonable force to search for prohibited items (as listed in the DfE's searching, screening and confiscation guidance).
- They cannot use reasonable force to search for items that are banned under school rules only.

The decision to use reasonable force to carry out a search should be made carefully, on a case-by-case basis and taking into consideration the level of risk to pupils and staff.

Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention that keeps a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevents them from leaving, for the safety of that pupil and/or others. This could be through physical obstruction or by making the pupil believe that they will be punished if they leave.

Seclusion is only used as a safety measure when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. Seclusion is not used as a threat or punishment. Seclusion is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour.

During seclusion:

- The pupil will be secluded in a safe place that does not feel threatening or intimidating to them.
- The pupil will be supervised at all times, by at least 1 member of staff.

As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil will be allowed to leave.

Deciding whether the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate

The decision on whether to use restrictive interventions is down to the professional judgment of the staff member and will always depend on the individual circumstances of each situation.

Staff should always consider whether there are other ways to manage the situation, such as the de-escalation techniques (outlined in school behaviour policies) and seeking assistance from a colleague. However, there may be times when staff have no other choice but to use restrictive interventions, to reduce the risk of harm to the pupil and/or others.

When assessing whether a restrictive intervention is required, staff should consider:

Necessity

- Whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage the situation.

- Whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the risks, or whether its use could escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself.

Proportionality

- Where the least amount of force and/or the least restrictive intervention should be used for the least amount of time required.
- Whether the intervention itself is escalating the situation and if so, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy.
- Consider the individual circumstances of the pupil, such as their age, size and any medical conditions, SEND or other vulnerabilities.

Pupil welfare

The safety and wellbeing of the pupil involved remains the most important consideration, as well as the safety of other pupils and staff.

Staff should consider the potential impact on the pupil's welfare balanced against any actions taken. For example, staff should bear in mind that pupils who have experienced adverse life events, trauma or neglect, or who have diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, communication difficulties or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.

If a restrictive intervention is needed, staff should always aim to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity. This includes consideration of the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.

Staff should, wherever possible, clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and what the pupil needs to do, including using verbal and non-verbal strategies where needed, and giving time for the pupil to process information and respond where appropriate.

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.

Support following an incident

As soon as possible after any use of restrictive intervention, schools will evaluate the incident to understand why a restrictive intervention was used, the impact on pupils and staff, any patterns and trends, and how another incident could be avoided in the future.

Schools will ensure each pupil and staff member involved are able to access the right support, including a medical assessment and treatment if needed, and an opportunity to reflect on and talk through the incident.

This follow-up conversation(s) will be part of the overall debriefing process to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from all parties involved. Conversations should also aim to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue.

Wherever possible, this process will be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident. It may also include the presence of an additional person to ensure impartiality and support. Ongoing monitoring of pupil and staff wellbeing will take place, and additional support will be provided if needed.

Depending on the circumstances, support may also be offered to those who witnessed the incident.

Considerations for pupils with SEND

Pupils with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Pupils who have difficulty communicating verbally might show their needs and discomfort through their actions.

All staff are committed to understanding what might trigger challenging behaviour in pupils with SEND, and to providing the right support and an inclusive environment.

Where staff have identified that there is an increased likelihood of needing to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions, a risk assessment will be carried out. Staff are aware of their duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities to avoid disadvantage and ensure they can take part in school life as fully as possible.

Schools will utilise 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. Schools will also work with the pupil, their parents/carers and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

These strategies might include:

- Removing stimuli that may be causing distress to the pupil.
- Staff members changing how they communicate with the pupil, such as being more mindful of body language, facial expressions and/or tone of voice.
- Helping the pupil express their emotions before getting overwhelmed.
- Engaging the pupil in activities to help them regulate their emotions.
- Distracting the pupil with familiar objects or activities to redirect their attention.

Recording and reporting arrangements

There is a legal duty to record and report upon the following incidents:

- Significant incidents involving force.
- Seclusion incidents.
- Restraint incidents.

Staff will record the incident on the school's safeguarding system, assigning to the Headteacher and DSL, as soon as practicably possible after the event. Staff will record and report, even if the use of a restrictive intervention is agreed as part of a pupil's support plan.

The Headteacher and/or DSL will be routinely monitoring and evaluating the management of restrictive interventions and associated record keeping.

Completed reports will be kept securely and retained in line with our data protection procedures.

Information to be recorded

For all significant incidents, seclusion incidents or restraint incidents, the following information will be recorded:

- The names of the pupil and staff member(s) directly involved.
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether they have an identified special educational need or disability, and their SEN status.
- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention.
- Any known or potential triggers for the behaviour.
- A clear and brief description of what happened, including:
 - What led up to the incident.
 - Description of the intervention.
 - The type of restrictive intervention used (including the type and degree of reasonable force applied if applicable).
 - Any preventative or de-escalation strategies used.
 - Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable.
- A brief explanation of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that situation.
- Details of any support given after the incident, such as medical help or emotional support.
- When and how parents/carers were notified and by whom.

Reporting incidents to parents/carers

All incidents of restrictive intervention involving the use of force will be reported to parents/carers unless the DSL and the member of staff believe that informing the pupil's parents/carers would likely result in significant harm to that pupil.

In this instance, the DSL will report the incident to any parent/carer who it can be reported to without resulting in significant harm or, if there are none, to the local authority where the pupil ordinarily resides. When communicating with the local authority, the school will:

- Include all information that would have otherwise been shared with the pupil's parents/carers.
- Identify the reasons believed to be unsafe to tell the pupil's parents/carers directly.

When reporting to parents/carers, we will:

- Verbally share the following information as soon as practicably possible:
 - The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention.
 - A brief explanation of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that situation.
 - A brief description of the type of intervention and/or degree of force (where applicable) that was used.
 - Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable and any support provided following the incident.

- Provide, in writing, a copy of the Restrictive Intervention log.

When reporting to parents/carers we will have regard to data protection requirements when deciding what information to share. For example, we will not include any identifying details of any other pupil.

Post-incident follow-up

If deemed appropriate, the DSL will invite parents/carers to have a follow-up discussion about the incident. For example, the discussion might include:

- Any behavioural triggers or warning signs of an impending incident.
- Whether any agreed support plans were followed.
- What de-escalation strategies were used and how effective they were.
- What might be done differently in the future.

Concerns and Complaints

Should a parent/carer have concerns about the use of restrictive interventions, they should in the first instance discuss this with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Headteacher.

Should the concerns still not be resolved, the matter may then be raised in accordance with The Rivers C.of E. Academy Trust Complaints Policy which is published on the trust's website.

We take any allegation of inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions made against a member of staff very seriously. We will deal with allegations in line with the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education.