



Positive Handling Policy

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Aims and scope	2	1
2. Legislation and statutory guidance	2	
3. Definitions	2	
Restrictive intervention	2	
Reasonable force	2	
Restraint	3	
Seclusion	3	
Significant incident	3	
4. Appropriate physical contact	3	
5. Acceptable uses of reasonable force	3	
6. Unacceptable uses of force	3	
7. Seclusion	4	
8. Prevention and de-escalation	4	
9. Pupils with SEND	4	
10. Training and staff support	4	
11. Recording and reporting	5	
Recording	5	
Reporting to parents	5	
12. Post-incident support and review	5	
13. Complaints and allegations	5	
14. Monitoring and review	5	
15. Linked policies	5	

1. Aims and scope

At Bracken Hill School, we are committed to providing a safe, caring and supportive environment where all pupils and staff feel protected, valued and respected. We recognise that pupils may at times experience emotional or behavioural dysregulation that places themselves or others at risk. In rare circumstances, the use of restrictive interventions – including reasonable force or seclusion – may be lawful and necessary to maintain safety.

We understand that restrictive interventions can have a significant physical and emotional impact on pupils, staff and families. Therefore, they are only ever used as a last resort, when all reasonable preventative and de-escalation strategies have been exhausted.

This policy aims to:

- Minimise the need for restrictive interventions through prevention, early intervention and de-escalation
- Ensure staff understand when and how restrictive interventions may be used lawfully, safely and proportionately
- Protect the safety, wellbeing and dignity of pupils and staff
- Set out clear procedures for recording, reporting and reviewing incidents in line with statutory duties
- Ensure compliance with the April 2026 DfE guidance and associated regulations

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers working at Bracken Hill School and during all school activities, including off-site visits.

2. Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy is informed by, and complies with, the following legislation and guidance:

- [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#) (sections 93 and 93A)
- [Schools \(Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint\) \(No. 2\) \(England\) Regulations 2025](#)
- [Education Act 1996](#) (sections 550ZA and 550ZB)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Human Rights Act 1998](#)
- [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)
- [Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools \(DfE, April 2026\)](#)
- [Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools \(DfE\)](#)
- [Behaviour in Schools \(DfE\)](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(DfE\)](#)

3. Definitions

Restrictive intervention

A restrictive intervention is any action that prevents, restricts, or subdues a pupil's movement, or part of their body. This includes both physical and non-physical interventions.

Reasonable force

Reasonable force refers to actions involving physical contact used to prevent harm, using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time. The level of force used must be proportionate to the risk and circumstances.

Restraint

A non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises or restricts a pupil's movement. This may involve physical contact (e.g. holding arms) or non-physical actions (e.g. removing mobility aids).

Seclusion

A non-disciplinary safety measure involving keeping a pupil away from others and preventing them from leaving, to reduce immediate risk of harm. Seclusion must never be used as punishment or threatened as a sanction.

Significant incident

Any incident where the use of force goes beyond ordinary, appropriate physical contact (such as guiding or comforting). This includes cases where physical force is used to implement a non-physical restriction.

4. Appropriate physical contact

Bracken Hill School does **not** operate a 'no-contact' policy. Appropriate and proportionate physical contact is sometimes necessary and beneficial.

Appropriate contact may include:

- Providing first aid
- Guiding or escorting a pupil
- Comforting a distressed pupil
- Congratulating or praising a pupil (e.g. a pat on the back)
- Demonstrating techniques in PE or practical lessons

When considering physical contact, staff must use professional judgement and consider:

- Safeguarding and child protection guidance
- The pupil's age, needs and vulnerabilities (including SEND)
- Whether alternative strategies are available
- The context, environment and presence of other adults

5. Acceptable uses of reasonable force

All school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from:

- Causing injury to themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence
- Damaging property
- Causing serious disruption to good order and discipline

Reasonable force must always be:

- **Necessary** – there is no safer alternative
- **Proportionate** – the minimum intervention required
- **Reasonable** – taking account of the pupil's age, SEND, size and circumstances

6. Unacceptable uses of force

The following are **never acceptable**:

- Use of force as punishment, threat or deterrent
- Any action that restricts breathing, airway or circulation
- Applying pressure to the neck, chest or abdomen

- Ground restraint (unless unavoidable and immediately moved to a safer position)

7. Seclusion

Seclusion may only be used as a short-term safety measure when a pupil is experiencing extreme emotional or behavioural dysregulation and presents an immediate risk of harm.

During seclusion:

- The space must be safe, calm and non-threatening
- The pupil must be supervised at all times
- The pupil must be allowed to leave as soon as risk reduces
- The incident must be recorded and reported in line with Section 12

8. Prevention and de-escalation

Bracken Hill School prioritises prevention through:

- Strong relationships and co-regulation
- Predictable environments and clear routines
- Individual Behaviour and Risk Management Plans (BRMPs)
- Trauma-informed and SEND-aware practice

De-escalation strategies include:

- Verbal reassurance and active listening
- Distraction and redirection
- Tactical ignoring
- Offering choices
- Removing an audience
- Access to calm or regulation spaces

9. Pupils with SEND

We recognise that pupils with SEND may be disproportionately affected by restrictive interventions. We therefore:

- Identify triggers and early warning signs
- Make reasonable adjustments under the [Equality Act 2010](#)
- Work closely with parents and professionals
- Regularly review behaviour support plans following any incident

10. Training and staff support

All relevant staff receive Team Teach training appropriate to their role, with annual refreshers.

No member of staff will be expected to engage in physical intervention if it places them at risk. Staff with medical limitations must inform SLT. Training levels and authorisation to use restrictive interventions are monitored and reviewed by senior leaders.

Risk assessments are in place for roles, environments and situations where restrictive interventions may be required. These assessments inform prevention strategies, staffing arrangements, training levels, and the support provided to staff, in line with health and safety duties.

Following any incident, staff will be offered debriefing and wellbeing support.

11. Recording and reporting

Recording

All significant incidents involving: Reasonable force; Restraint; Seclusion

must be recorded as soon as practicable and no later than the same day. This includes incidents of restraint that do not involve direct physical contact, such as the removal of a mobility aid or blocking a pupil's movement without physical contact. These incidents must also be recorded and reported in line with statutory requirements, even where no physical force has been used.

Records must include (as a minimum):

- Names of pupil and staff involved
- Time, date, location and duration
- Description of the incident, triggers and de-escalation attempts
- Justification for the intervention
- Type and degree of force used (if applicable)
- Any injuries and post-incident support

Reporting to parents

Parents/carers must be informed as soon as practicable and normally the same day, in writing. Exceptions apply only where this would result in significant harm.

12. Post-incident support and review

Following an incident:

- The pupil's immediate needs will be addressed
- Relationships will be repaired through reflective conversations
- Patterns and triggers will be analysed
- Behaviour plans will be updated where required

13. Complaints and allegations

Complaints regarding restrictive interventions will be managed through the school's complaints procedure.

Allegations against staff will be handled in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.

14. Monitoring and review

The Senior Leadership Team will report termly to Governors on the use of restrictive interventions. Governors will actively review and interrogate this data to identify patterns, repeat incidents, training needs, the effectiveness of prevention strategies, and any disproportionality, including in relation to pupils with SEND or protected characteristics.

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure compliance with legislation and best practice.

15. Linked policies

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- SEND Policy
- Complaints Policy