
Physical Intervention Policy

Signhills Academy



Approved by:	Full Governing Board	Date: Spring 2026
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Statement of Intent

Signhills Academy believes that it is important to establish a safe, secure and stable environment to enable pupils to grow, develop and learn. To achieve this, the school recognises that, in certain circumstances, physical intervention — including safe touch and the use of reasonable force — is necessary.

The school understands that behaviour is often a means of communication which may signal that a pupil is in need of support but does not know how to express this. Therefore, the school takes a proactive approach to anticipating, managing and minimising potential triggers of distressed behaviour that may cause harm.

This policy acknowledges that situations may arise in which staff members will be required to use physical intervention, and in some cases reasonable force, in order to handle pupils' emotions or behaviour when other measures have failed or are not appropriate. The aim of this policy is to ensure that physical intervention is used in a correct and safe manner, in accordance with the relevant legislation and national guidance.

The school's stance is as follows:

- Physical intervention and reasonable force will only be used as a last resort, and never as a form of punishment.
- The school will take a proactive approach to preventing the need for physical intervention through early support, prevention and de-escalation.
- All pupils have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- The school will ensure that all incidents are recorded and reported in line with its statutory obligations.
- Staff will be appropriately trained and supported in using physical intervention safely and lawfully.

1. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, in particular sections 93 and 93A
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Education Act 1996, section 550ZA(3)
- Children Act 1989
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- DfE 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools' (April 2026)

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- DfE 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2025)
 - DfE 'Behaviour in Schools'
 - HM Government 'Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedures
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Low-level Safeguarding Concerns Policy

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 The Governing Board

The governing board has ultimate responsibility for this policy, but will delegate day-to-day responsibility to the Headteacher.

The governing board is responsible for:

- Monitoring the overall implementation of this policy.
- Ensuring the school's procedures for recording and reporting the use of force and seclusion are complied with.
- Regularly reviewing and interrogating data on restrictive interventions to identify trends, disproportionate use and areas for improvement.
- Evaluating, on an annual basis, instances of physical intervention to analyse how and when reasonable force is used.
- Reviewing this policy on an annual basis.
- Responding to any complaints, in liaison with the Headteacher, from pupils or parents regarding the use of reasonable force.

2.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring all members of staff understand the correct conduct in terms of physical intervention and positive handling.
- Deciding whether members of staff require additional training, considering the needs of pupils.
- Carrying out risk assessments to ensure that staff who regularly work with pupils where reasonable force may be required can do so as safely as possible.
- Ensuring that any member of staff who uses reasonable force accurately records the relevant information on CPOMS on the same day.
- Maintaining and reviewing records of physical intervention on a termly basis to identify patterns and ensure appropriate use.
- Ensuring that the Behaviour Policy sets out the circumstances in which force might be used.
- Handling any allegations of abuse in line with the Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy.
- Responding to any complaints, in liaison with the governing board, from pupils or parents regarding the use of reasonable force.

2.3 The SENCO

The SENCO is responsible for:

- Providing training to members of staff on how to handle the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Ensuring staff understand how pupils with SEND may react differently to restrictive interventions.
- Ensuring staff understand the additional vulnerability of pupils with SEND or medical conditions.

- Developing individual risk assessments and individual support plans for pupils with SEND, agreed with parents, and ensuring teaching staff are aware of these.
- Evaluating on a termly basis how reasonable force is used with regard to pupils with SEND, in collaboration with the Headteacher.

2.4 The DSL

The DSL is responsible for:

- Providing staff with training on reasonable force and restrictive interventions where the Headteacher deems it necessary.
- Ensuring all members of staff use physical intervention in accordance with this policy.
- Reviewing this policy in liaison with the Headteacher and governing board.

2.5 All Staff

All staff members are responsible for:

- Avoiding restrictive interventions wherever possible and only using reasonable force as a last resort.
- Only using reasonable force in certain circumstances — 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.
- Understanding the unacceptable uses of force and the legal implications of using force in that way.
- Recording and reporting any significant incident in line with this policy.

3. Definitions

The following definitions apply throughout this policy, in line with the DfE's guidance 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools' (April 2026):

Restrictive intervention	An action or measure used to prevent, limit, or control the movement of a pupil's body, or part of their body. This policy uses 'restrictive intervention' as an umbrella term encompassing both physical and non-physical interventions intended to restrict a pupil's movement or behaviour.
Reasonable force	A legal term referring to physical restrictive interventions. All members of school staff have the statutory power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances. It means using no more force than is necessary, for the least amount of time, proportionate to the specific circumstances.
Significant incident	Any incident in which the use of force exceeds appropriate, everyday physical contact between pupils and staff. This includes situations where physical force is used to carry out or support 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 — either by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave.
Restraint	A non-disciplinary intervention, used in legislation, that immobilises a pupil or restricts their movement. Restraint may involve direct physical contact or indirect actions, such as removing a pupil's crutches.

4. Avoiding Physical Intervention and Reducing Risk

The school expects staff to assess whether a situation can be resolved without physical intervention before resorting to it. Staff will not generally resort to physical contact or reasonable force without first considering alternatives.

Where possible, the school implements a prevention-first approach. Staff will be trained in recognising warning signs of distress or aggressive behaviour, communicating empathetically with pupils, and adjusting the environment to minimise distressing stimuli.

Whole-School Measures

The school will employ the following whole-school measures to reduce the need for restrictive interventions:

- Consideration of how the school and classroom environment can support all pupils to achieve and thrive.
- Sharing best practice for whole-class behaviour management, including in communal spaces.
- Training staff in effective communication strategies, including use of appropriate tone of voice and empathy to aid de-escalation.
- Development of positive working staff-pupil relationships and trust.
- Recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning.

Individual Approaches

The school will also implement tailored approaches for individual pupils, including:

- Working closely with parents to support individual pupils.
- Developing individual support plans for pupils based on their identified needs.
- Giving pupils time, space and strategies to calm down before behaviour escalates.
- Providing reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Determining Whether Physical Intervention is Necessary

Before using any restrictive intervention, staff should consider the following:

Is it necessary?

- Staff should consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation.
- Staff should assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to reduce the relevant risks, or whether it would escalate the situation further or cause more harm.
- Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.

Is it proportionate?

- Staff should use the least amount of force, or least restrictive intervention, necessary for the least amount of time required.
- If the intervention is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy.
- Staff should consider the pupil's personal circumstances, such as medical conditions, SEND, age and size.

Have you considered the pupil's welfare?

- Staff should consider the impact on the pupil's overall wellbeing, balanced against any actions taken.
- Staff should seek to maintain respect for the pupil's dignity, including considering the location of any intervention.
- Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and what the pupil needs to do.

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- For pupils with communication difficulties or English as an additional language, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies should be used to ensure the pupil understands and has adequate time to respond.
 - Staff should seek to understand how the pupil is feeling and use this to determine whether a restrictive intervention should be applied, reduced or stopped.

Unacceptable Uses of Force

It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment. The following are absolutely prohibited:

- Restraining a pupil in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation — for example, covering the mouth or nose, or applying pressure to the neck or abdomen.
- Holding a pupil on the ground — if a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release holds or reposition as quickly as possible.
- Using force as a method of behaviour management or discipline.

Other Physical Contact with Pupils

The school does not operate a 'no contact' policy, and will not grant requests by parents or staff not to use reasonable force. There are circumstances in which appropriate physical contact does not give rise to any question over the use of reasonable force, including:

- To give first aid.
- To guide or escort pupils, such as holding a pupil's hand when going to assembly or on a school trip.
- To comfort a distressed pupil.
- To congratulate or praise a pupil, for example a pat on the back.
- Where appropriate contact is initiated by the pupil.
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE or sports coaching.

5. Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary measure that may be used, in exceptional circumstances, 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.

Seclusion will not be implemented through the threat of punishment, and will not be used as a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. The school will use appropriate disciplinary measures, such as removal from the classroom, in line with the Behaviour Policy.

Where seclusion is used, the school will ensure that:

- The space to which the pupil is confined is safe, suitable and not intimidating or threatening to the pupil.
- The pupil is appropriately supervised at all times during the period of seclusion.
- The restriction lasts only for as long as the immediate risk of harm remains.
- The pupil is allowed to leave as soon as it is safe to do so.

Any incident involving the use of seclusion must be recorded and reported in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 8 of this policy.

6. Pupils with SEND

Some children and young people with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours that may be harmful to themselves or others. Triggers may include pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar environments, or feelings of fear and anxiety. In particular, pupils who are non-verbal or find verbal communication challenging may express their needs or confusion through actions.

The school recognises that pupils with SEND are at risk of being disproportionately subject to the use of restrictive interventions. The school will seek to minimise this by understanding the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour and providing proactive support.

The SENCO will ensure that the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are adhered to in relation to reasonable adjustments, non-discrimination and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

De-escalation Strategies for Pupils with SEND

Where appropriate, the following de-escalation strategies may be employed:

- 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 they become overwhelmed.
- Engaging the pupil in an activity which can help them manage feelings of anxiety.
- Distracting the pupil with something that interests them, or introducing familiar objects and activities to redirect their attention.

Staff will not assume that a strategy employed for one pupil with SEND will be applicable to other pupils with SEND.

Individual Support Plans

Where appropriate, staff will work with pupils with SEND and their parents in the co-production of individual support plans. These plans will:

- Outline any adjustments and methods to communicate the pupil's needs effectively.
- Detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil.
- Be reviewed with the pupil and their parent periodically and following any significant incident.

Where there is an identified risk, such as an increased likelihood of needing to use reasonable force, the school will put risk assessments in place and mitigate risks through training and prevention strategies.

7. Post-Incident Support

The school will evaluate all incidents involving the use of restrictive intervention as soon as practicable after the event, in order to understand why it was used, the impact on pupils and staff, any patterns and trends, and how the use of restrictive interventions might be avoided in future.

If appropriate, the pupil and staff member involved will receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. Any injuries will also be recorded in accordance with the school's procedures and reported to the Health and Safety Executive as required.

Debriefing and Follow-up

The school will hold follow-up conversations to facilitate reflection, learning and to support pupil and staff wellbeing. This process will:

- Be framed as part of the overall debriefing process.
- Seek to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from both the staff and pupils involved.
- Seek to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue.
- Be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident, with the presence of an additional person to ensure impartiality and support.

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

Any pupil who witnesses an incident of restrictive intervention where a peer may have been injured or become distressed will also be provided with appropriate support where necessary.

8. Recording and Reporting Incidents

8.1 Recording the Use of Force (Statutory)

Incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event by the staff member(s) involved, and no later than the same day. The requirement to record applies even if the use of restrictive interventions is agreed with parents as part of an individual support plan.

The school will record the following details on CPOMS as a minimum:

- Names of the pupil and staff directly involved.
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil has SEND and their SEN status code.
- Time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention.
- A brief account of the incident, including what led up to it, identified or potential triggers, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used, the type of reasonable force applied, the degree of force, and details of any physical injuries.
- A brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary.
- Any post-incident support, such as details of medical treatment.

8.2 Reporting the Use of Force to Parents (Statutory)

Parents must be informed, as soon as practicable, about each significant use of force to the parents of the pupil involved as soon as practicable, and no later than the same day.

Exceptions to this requirement are where it appears that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. In such cases, the incident must be reported to the local authority.

A report to parents will include as a minimum:

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

Parents will be invited to have a follow-up discussion about the incident where appropriate, including discussion of behavioural triggers, the effectiveness of de-escalation strategies used, and what might be done differently in future. This information may be used to amend any existing individual support plans.

8.3 Recording and Reporting Seclusion and Non-Force Related Restraint (Statutory)

Incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event, and no later than the same day. The same minimum information as for use of force incidents must be recorded. Parents must be informed as soon as practicable, and no later than the same day, subject to the same exceptions.

Where an incident involving seclusion or non-physical restraint also constitutes a significant use of force, the school will follow the reporting procedure for significant use of force only — the same information does not need to be reported twice.

8.4 Use of Data by the Governing Board

The governing board will regularly review and interrogate data on restrictive interventions to:

- 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.
- Identify any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to pupils with SEND, protected characteristics, or other vulnerabilities.

9. Complaints

Any complaints regarding the use of restrictive interventions will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.

If an allegation regarding inappropriate use of force or other restrictive interventions is made against a member of staff, the procedures in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' will be followed, including the provisions regarding suspension of staff.

10. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Headteacher, DSL, SENCO and governing board, who will consider any necessary changes and communicate the findings of the review to all members of staff.

The Headteacher, in collaboration with other staff members, will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and implement any changes that may be required.

Monitoring will take place through:

- Reviewing data on the use of restrictive interventions to identify any trends or particular issues and take appropriate action.
- Examining patterns of use in relation to individual pupils and groups, particularly those with SEND or protected characteristics.
- Holding lessons-learned sessions following any significant incidents.