



Restrictive Intervention Policy (including the use of reasonable force)

Document control

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Statutory status	Statutory. The School must have regard to statutory guidance issued under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, and must meet the recording and reporting requirements of the Independent School Standards.
Applies to	All staff, including teaching and support staff, supply staff, volunteers, contractors and anyone else with lawful charge of pupils; the whole School, including the Prep School and the EYFS setting.
Availability	Published on the School website and available to parents on request.

Policy summary

Physical intervention is a last resort, and the best intervention is the one that never becomes necessary. This policy explains how we reduce the need for restrictive intervention through relationships, understanding and de-escalation; when reasonable force and other restrictive interventions may lawfully be used and by whom; how every incident is recorded, reported to parents and reviewed; how we care for pupils and staff afterwards; and the additional care taken with pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities. It applies to all staff and volunteers with lawful charge of pupils, across the whole School including the EYFS.

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1. Why this policy matters

Cokethorpe is a school built on respect and integrity, and on a shared sense of purpose, belonging and responsibility. Almost everything we do to keep pupils safe is achieved through relationships, clear expectations, good teaching and early support. Physical intervention is not part of how we manage behaviour, and it is not a sanction.

There are, however, rare moments when a child is in danger, or is placing someone else in danger, and no other course of action will keep people safe. In those moments staff need to know what they are lawfully able to do, what is expected of them, and that the School will support them. Pupils and parents equally need to know that any use of force at Cokethorpe is a last resort, is the least restrictive option available, lasts no longer than necessary, and is always recorded, reported and reviewed.

This policy explains how we reduce the need for restrictive interventions, when they may be used, what may never be done, and how every incident is recorded, reported to parents and scrutinised by School leaders and Governors.

2. What we are seeking to achieve

- That restrictive interventions are rare, and become rarer, because prevention and de-escalation work.
- That where an intervention is unavoidable, it is necessary, proportionate, time-limited and carried out with regard to the pupil's dignity, safety and needs.
- That pupils with special educational needs or disabilities, and pupils who have experienced trauma, are supported through planned, individual strategies rather than reactive force.
- That every incident is recorded accurately, reported to parents promptly, and followed by support and reflection for the pupil and the staff involved.
- That leaders and Governors can see the whole picture — how often, with whom, and why — and act on it.
- That staff feel confident, trained and supported, and know that acting in good faith within this policy will be backed by the School.

3. Scope and status

This policy applies to all staff and to anyone else authorised by the Head to have control or charge of pupils, including volunteers, supply staff and contractors. It applies across the whole School, including the Prep School and the EYFS setting.

It applies on the School site and at any time when a member of staff has lawful charge of pupils elsewhere, for example on a trip, a fixture, an expedition or another authorised School activity.

Where this policy uses *must*, it refers to a legal duty or a requirement the School treats as mandatory. Where it uses *should*, it refers to expected practice where professional judgement is permitted. Where it uses *may*, it refers to a permitted action.

The School has regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, currently "Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools", which took effect on 1 April 2026. The Governing Body and the Head must have regard to the statutory elements of that guidance when carrying out their functions relating to the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions.

4. Definitions

Restrictive intervention — any action that prevents, restricts or subdues the movement of a pupil's body, or part of it. It is the umbrella term for both physical and non-physical measures that restrict a pupil's movement, liberty or ability to act independently.

Reasonable force — the minimum degree of physical force necessary, used for the shortest time necessary, to prevent an immediate risk of harm or to carry out a lawful search for an item prohibited by law. Force may be passive contact, such as standing between two pupils or blocking a path, or active contact, such as leading a pupil by the arm away from a situation.

Restraint — a restrictive intervention that holds back, physically prevents or otherwise restricts a pupil's movement. Restraint does not always involve direct physical contact: blocking a pupil's exit, or removing a mobility aid such as crutches or a walking frame, are both forms of restraint.

Non-physical restraint — restraint achieved without direct physical contact, for example by blocking movement or preventing a pupil from leaving an area.

Seclusion — a non-disciplinary intervention in which a pupil is kept confined away from others and prevented from leaving, whether by physical obstruction, by blocking, or by being led to believe they will be punished if they try to leave.

Significant incident — any use of force that goes beyond appropriate physical contact, including where the degree, duration or context of the force is more than minimal, or where a restrictive intervention is used to prevent harm. It includes the use of physical force to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

These terms are defined for completeness and for accuracy of recording. Defining a practice here is not an endorsement of its use; several will never be relevant at Cokethorpe.

5. Corporal punishment and physical contact that is never permitted

Corporal punishment of pupils, and the threat of corporal punishment, are prohibited at Cokethorpe School and are unlawful under section 548 of the Education Act 1996.

Staff must not use any degree of physical contact that is deliberately designed to punish a pupil, or to cause pain, injury or humiliation — for example holding a pupil around the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict the pupil's ability to breathe or to speak.

Restrictive interventions must never be used as a punishment, to enforce compliance, or to manage low-level disruption. Staff must not:

- use force in a way that restricts a pupil's breathing or circulation, including any pressure to the neck, chest, abdomen, mouth or nose;
- use pain-inducing techniques or holds designed to inflict pain;
- threaten the use of force or of seclusion as a sanction.

Prone and ground restraints carry an elevated risk of harm and must be avoided wherever possible. If a pupil is taken to the ground, staff must release the hold or reposition the pupil as quickly as possible, and must ensure that a medical assessment is undertaken immediately where any injury may have occurred.

6. Reducing the need for restrictive intervention

The most effective safeguard is a School in which pupils feel known, settled and understood. We reduce the need for restrictive interventions through consistent, whole-School measures:

- clear, positively framed routines and expectations, taught explicitly and revisited in lessons, assemblies and tutor time, supported by a curriculum that builds social, emotional and self-regulation skills;
- a calm and predictable environment, including a visible staff presence at transition points, structured starts and finishes to lessons, and access to quiet or regulation spaces;
- restorative approaches, including recognition of positive behaviour and restorative conversations to repair harm and rebuild trust after an incident;
- regular staff training and reminders on de-escalation, communication, trauma-informed practice, autism and ADHD awareness, and lawful decision-making about restrictive interventions;
- monitoring of behaviour and restrictive intervention data to identify patterns, triggers and disproportionality, and to inform improvement planning, environmental adjustments and training;
- open communication with pupils and parents about our approach, and opportunities for families to share a pupil's preferences, regulation strategies and communication needs.

7. De-escalation

De-escalation is the foundation of our approach. All staff share responsibility for using proactive and preventative strategies to reduce the need for physical intervention wherever possible. Effective de-escalation reduces risk, maintains dignity, strengthens relationships and supports long-term positive behaviour.

Early, proactive strategies

- remove sources of frustration where it is practical and safe to do so;
- offer reassurance, including positive physical prompts such as guiding a pupil away;
- use a well-rehearsed help script, for example: "Asha, I can see that something has happened. Talk and I'll listen...";
- explain clearly what is happening and what will happen next;
- use CALM body language, speak slowly and quietly and keep the tone of voice low;
- divert and distract by introducing another activity or topic;
- use strategies that have worked well for that individual before.

Where a pupil is already showing heightened stress, anxiety or frustration

A pupil may be shouting, crying or using abusive language, may show changed facial expression or agitated movement, may pick up objects that could be used as weapons, may challenge instructions or break minor rules. In these circumstances staff should, singly or in combination:

- continue to use the early de-escalation responses;
- state the desired behaviour clearly;
- offer alternatives, options and clear, limited choices;
- move furniture and remove objects that could become weapons;
- offer the pupil a way out that maintains their dignity;
- encourage others nearby to move to a different environment.

Wherever it is practicable to do so, before intervening physically a member of staff should:

- tell the pupil to stop;
- seek extra adult support;
- tell the pupil what will happen if they do not stop;

- consider where the intervention would take place, including whether it would happen in front of peers, and how the pupil's dignity can be maintained;
- remain calm and keep communicating with the pupil;
- reassure the pupil that any physical intervention will stop as soon as it is no longer necessary.

8. When reasonable force and other restrictive interventions may be used

The School does not operate a "no contact" policy, and will not honour requests from parents or staff to opt out of the use of reasonable force. Appropriate, non-force physical contact is a normal and necessary part of school life: administering first aid, providing personal care in line with a care plan, guiding a pupil, comforting a distressed pupil, or demonstrating an activity or technique are all consistent with discharging our duty of care.

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives all members of staff, and any other person authorised by the Head to have control or charge of pupils, the legal power to use such force as is reasonable in all the circumstances. Staff may use reasonable force or another restrictive intervention only where it is necessary to prevent a pupil from:

1. causing injury to themselves or to another person, including a member of staff;
2. committing a criminal offence;
3. seriously damaging property, where this creates a risk to safety; or
4. causing an immediate risk of disorder that presents a risk of harm.

Any intervention must be the least restrictive option likely to be effective, and must be used for the minimum time necessary to reduce the immediate risk.

While staff have a legal power, they are not under a legal duty to use force. Equally, staff owe pupils a duty of care, and a failure to act where action is needed may itself be a breach of that duty. Staff are expected to use their professional judgement, and the School will support decisions taken reasonably and in good faith.

The decision test

Before intervening, and throughout any intervention, staff must consider:

- **Necessity:** is there an immediate risk of harm that cannot be addressed safely by de-escalation or a less restrictive alternative?
- **Proportionality:** is the degree and duration of the restriction the minimum necessary to reduce that risk?
- **Welfare and context:** have the pupil's age, size, medical conditions, SEND, experience of trauma, dignity, communication needs and the physical environment been taken into account?

Staff must pause or stop where the intervention is escalating the risk.

Forms of intervention

Where an intervention is necessary, it may take the form of:

- physically interposing between pupils;
- holding;
- pushing;

- pulling;
- shepherding a pupil away, for example by placing a hand in the centre of the back;
- in extreme circumstances, a more restrictive hold.

The use of a more restrictive hold as a planned measure must be authorised in advance by the Head, the Head of Prep, the Deputy Head Pastoral and Wellbeing or the Designated Safeguarding Lead. This internal authorisation requirement does not override the individual legal power of a member of staff to act immediately, without prior authorisation, where that is necessary to prevent harm.

9. Reasonable force and searching

Reasonable force may be used only when searching for items prohibited by law under the Education Act 1996. Force must not be used to search for an item that is banned only under any School Rules that exist. Any decision to use force during a search is taken case by case, using no more force than is necessary and for the shortest time, and with regard to de-escalation wherever possible. The School's arrangements for searching, screening and confiscation are set out in the Conducting a Search Policy and Procedure.

Any significant use of force during a search must be recorded and reported under section 10 of this policy.

10. Recording and reporting

Accurate records are how the School learns, how it protects pupils, and how it protects staff. Since 1 April 2026 the School has been under statutory duties to record and report restrictive interventions.

What must be recorded

The School must record every:

- significant incident involving the use of physical force;
- use of non-physical restraint, including blocking a pupil's exit or removing a mobility aid;
- use of seclusion.

Where an incident of seclusion or restraint also amounts to a significant use of force, it is recorded and reported once under this single procedure. It does not need to be reported twice.

Timescale and responsibility

The staff member or members involved must make a written record as soon as practicable and, in every case, no later than the same day. The incident must also be reported without delay to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will inform the Head.

All incidents must be recorded on CPOMS under the "Restrictive Intervention" category. The Designated Safeguarding Lead or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead will then add the incident to the School's Restrictive Intervention Log.

What the record must contain

As a minimum, every record must include:

5. the names of the pupil or pupils and of the staff directly involved, and the names of any witnesses;
6. the time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention;

7. any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil has an identified special educational need or disability, and their SEN status code;
8. a brief factual account of the incident, including what led up to it, any identified or potential triggers, and any preventative or de-escalation strategies used;
9. where relevant, the type of reasonable force applied and the degree of force used;
10. a brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary and proportionate in that instance;
11. details of any injuries or other adverse effects sustained, by any person;
12. any post-incident support provided, including any medical treatment;
13. confirmation of when and how parents were notified, or the reason notification was withheld.

Records must be accurate and factual, completed by the staff involved, and quality assured by a senior leader. They are retained in line with the School's Guidelines on the Storage and Retention of Records.

Reporting to parents

Each parent of the pupil concerned must be informed in writing as soon as practicable and no later than the same day. The report must include:

14. the time, date, location and duration of the intervention;
15. the reason the intervention was necessary;
16. the type and degree of force used;
17. details of any injuries sustained;
18. the post-incident support provided.

Parents will be invited into School so that, where appropriate, a plan or protocol for supporting their child can be agreed.

There are two limited exceptions to the requirement to notify parents:

19. Notification is not required where the pupil is **aged 20 or over**.
20. A person who would otherwise be required to provide a parent with information about an incident **must not provide it to that parent if it appears to that person that doing so would be likely to result in significant harm to the pupil**. Where it appears that there is no parent to whom the information could be provided without that being likely to result in significant harm to the pupil, the School must instead provide the information to the local authority within whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident.

"Significant harm" is the statutory term used in paragraph 32A of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as inserted by The Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025 (S.I. 2025/1348). It carries a specific meaning in children's law derived from section 31 of the Children Act 1989.

Where the pupil is in the EYFS setting, parents will be informed on the same day or as soon as is reasonably practicable, in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework and the School's EYFS Policy.

11. After an incident

The immediate priority after any incident is the wellbeing and safety of the pupils and staff involved. The School will arrange medical assessment or treatment for any injury.

Once it is appropriate to do so, a structured follow-up conversation will take place, overseen by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a Deputy and led by a member of staff who was not involved in the incident. It will cover the pupil's account, the accounts of the staff involved and the accounts of any pupils who witnessed the incident. The purpose is to understand, to repair relationships and to learn — not to apportion blame.

Ongoing wellbeing support is offered to pupils, staff and witnesses as needed.

The School's safeguarding team meets weekly to evaluate any incidents, to identify good practice and areas for improvement, and to check that records, parental notification and follow-up have all been completed properly.

Where a pupil has a behaviour support plan, that plan will be reviewed following any significant incident.

12. Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary safety measure. It may be used only to protect others from immediate harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation and is not acting with intent.

Seclusion must never be used or threatened as a punishment, and staff must not implement it through the threat of punishment.

Where seclusion is used:

- the place of confinement must be safe, and must not feel threatening or intimidating to the pupil;
- the pupil must be supervised at all times;
- the seclusion must last only as long as necessary, and 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 accordance with section 10.

13. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities

Some children and young people with SEND may respond to distressing or confusing situations with behaviour that could be harmful to themselves or to others. Triggers may include pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar situations or environments, or feelings of fear and anxiety. Pupils who are non-verbal, or who find verbal communication challenging, may express need, discomfort or confusion through their actions rather than their words.

The School recognises that pupils with SEND may be at greater risk of being subject to restrictive interventions, and that some pupils without SEND — for example those who have experienced trauma — also need individual support. We therefore work to understand the underlying triggers of distressed behaviour and to provide proactive, individual support, drawing wherever possible on the staff who know each pupil best.

Strategies may include:

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

- giving the pupil time and space to calm before behaviour escalates.

Behaviour support plans

Staff work with pupils with SEND and their parents in the co-production of any necessary behaviour support plan. A plan should set out:

- any adjustments required, including to aspects of the School environment the pupil finds challenging;
- the pupil's communication preferences and the ways they can express their needs effectively;
- the agreed parameters within which staff may have increased physical contact with that pupil.

Plans are reviewed with the pupil and their parents periodically, and after any significant incident, so that they reflect what has and has not worked in practice.

The School has regard to its duties under the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments, and to the Human Rights Act 1998. Further information about the School's support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is set out in the Learning Support Policy.

14. Training and support for staff

Staff cannot be expected to make sound decisions under pressure without preparation. The School therefore ensures that:

- all staff undertake training in the circumstances in which reasonable force may be used, delivered through a TES Develop course at the start of each academic year and as part of induction for new staff;
- all Prep School staff are trained in Team Teach annually, which provides a structured framework for de-escalation and, where necessary, safe physical intervention;
- staff likely to be involved in restrictive interventions receive relevant training that includes prevention and de-escalation;
- training is reviewed periodically and aligned with the principles in the current DfE guidance;
- risk assessments are undertaken to support staff to act safely and lawfully, in line with the School's duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of its employees.

The Head will consider, after any incident, whether individual members of staff or teams require additional training or support to de-escalate potential confrontations and reduce the need for restraint.

15. Governance and oversight

The Governing Body will ensure that:

- appropriate procedures are in place for recording and reporting restrictive interventions;
- data on the use of force, restraint and seclusion is reviewed regularly;
- patterns, trends and any disproportionality — including in relation to pupils with SEND and pupils with other protected characteristics — are identified and addressed;
- the effectiveness of preventative strategies is monitored.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead reports restrictive intervention data — including the number and type of incidents, any patterns, trends and disproportionality — to the Governors' Compliance Committee three times per year.

Senior leaders will monitor the use of restraint, and will take effective action where restraint has been used inappropriately.

This oversight exists to support safeguarding, staff training and continuous improvement. It is not there to apportion blame.

16. Approval

This policy is approved by Governors via the Compliance Committee.

17. Complaints and allegations

Any complaint or allegation about the use of a restrictive intervention will be taken seriously and investigated under the School's Complaints Procedure Policy and, where it concerns the conduct of a member of staff, under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Where an allegation meets the harm threshold in Part four of Keeping Children Safe in Education, the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Head must consult the local authority designated officer, and the School's procedures for managing allegations against staff apply.

Pupils, parents and staff will be supported appropriately throughout the process.

The existence of a complaint does not imply wrongdoing. Staff who act in good faith and within this policy will be supported by the School.

18. Related School policies and procedures

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following School policies and procedures:

1. Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures
2. Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy
3. Conducting a Search Policy and Procedure
4. Prevention of Bullying Policy
5. Learning Support Policy
6. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Policy
7. EYFS Intimate Care Policy
8. Complaints Procedure Policy
9. Health and Safety Policy
10. Risk Assessment Policy
11. Staff Behaviour Policy (Code of Conduct)
12. Guidelines on the Storage and Retention of Records
13. Privacy Notice

19. Legislation, regulation and guidance

This policy has regard to, among other sources:

1. Education and Inspections Act 2006, sections 93 and 93A;
2. Education Act 1996, section 548 (corporal punishment) and the statutory search powers;
3. The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended), including the recording and reporting requirements introduced with effect from 1 April 2026;

4. The Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025 (S.I. 2025/1348);
5. Equality Act 2010; Human Rights Act 1998; Children Act 1989;
6. DfE, "Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools" (effective 1 April 2026): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools>
7. DfE, "Keeping children safe in education" (KCSIE 2026 in force from 1 September 2026): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>
8. DfE, "Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff": <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-in-schools--2>
9. DfE, "Working together to safeguard children" (2026): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>
10. DHSC and DfE, "Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention" (2019): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-the-need-for-restraint-and-restrictive-intervention>

References are to the current version of each document. Where a version is material, the effective date is stated.