



**THAMES LEARNING  
TRUST**

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| Name of Policy   | Use of Physical Contact, Restrictive Interventions and Reasonable Force Policy |
| Scope of Policy  | This policy relates to all academies across TLT.                               |
| Approved by      | CEO  |
| Date of Approval | March 2026   |
| Review period    | Three Years  |
| Review Date      | March 2029   |

GROWING STRONGER TOGETHER



**THAMES LEARNING  
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## Introduction:

The Thames Learning Trust is committed to ensuring the welfare of its pupils, and recognises its role in safeguarding children. Trust schools aim for pupils to be happy, safe and secure. Behavioural expectations of pupils are clearly explained to staff, pupils and parents (see school behaviour policies).

There are occasions, in order to safeguard pupils, where staff may be required to have physical contact with a student to use reasonable force or another restrictive intervention to maintain safety or minimise disruption to the school population.

This policy aims to set out:

- What is defined as “reasonable force” and “restrictive interventions”
- When reasonable force and restrictive interventions may/may not be used in Thames Learning Trust Schools
- How reasonable force and restrictive interventions may be approached in Thames Learning Trust Schools

This policy has been written with reference to the DFE guidance [“Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools”](#).

## Definitions:

The following definitions have been taken from the DFE guidance [“Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools”](#).

**Reasonable Force:** a term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

**Restrictive Intervention:** a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This guidance uses ‘restrictive interventions’ as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways.

**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. For the purpose of this policy, “seclusion” refers to the restrictive intervention where it is used as a safety measure.

**Restraint:** a term used in legislation referring to a non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact. For example, holding a pupil’s arms to their sides or removing a pupil’s crutches would both be considered forms of restraint.

For the purpose of this policy, procedures for all physical interventions will be described using the term “reasonable force” and non-physical interventions will be described using the term “non-physical restrictive interventions”. The term “restrictive interventions” encompasses all interventions, both physical and non-physical.

Examples of non-physical restrictive interventions might include the use of seclusion, physically blocking a pupil’s path without touching them to prevent them from entering or leaving a room, or the removal of a walking-aid. This list is not exhaustive.

## **Scope:**

This policy applies to all staff members working in the Thames Learning Trust or any of its associated schools.

Any member of staff in a Thames Learning Trust school may be required to use reasonable force or restrictive interventions. This includes staff who have temporarily been placed in charge of pupils, such as a volunteer.

## **Guidance on the Use of Restrictive Interventions**

### ***Minimising Restrictive Interventions***

Use of restrictive interventions should be kept to a minimum, and only used when preventative and de-escalation strategies have not worked or are not appropriate. Thames Learning Trust schools will implement a number of whole-school and individual measures to support staff and pupils and to minimise the need for restrictive interventions.

Whole-school measures will include:

- Regular review and scrutiny of data surrounding restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning
- Best practice sharing for whole-class behaviour management
- Effective monitoring of communal spaces such as corridors and playgrounds
- Supporting staff to use de-escalation and preventative strategies

Individual measures might include:

- Working with pupils, parents and staff to support individual pupils
- Implementing behavioural support plans and/or risk assessments
- Working with external agencies to seek advice and support based on a pupil’s identified needs
- Implementing reasonable adjustments for pupils
- Allowing and supporting pupils to have time, space and strategies to calm down before their behaviour escalates.

### ***When Restrictive Interventions May be Used:***

This table describes circumstances when restrictive interventions may/may not be used. Before using force, a staff member should consider:

1. Whether the use of a restrictive intervention is necessary
2. Whether the use of a restrictive intervention is proportionate
3. The pupil's welfare

| <b>Restrictive interventions may be used:</b>  | <b>Restrictive interventions must <u>not</u> be used:</b>   |
|--|---|
| To prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others  | To punish a pupil. Using force to punish a pupil is unlawful  |
| To prevent pupils from damaging property or causing disorder   | When alternative methods of controlling a pupil have not been considered in the first instance (e.g. issuing pupils a verbal warning) |
| To prevent pupils from behaving in such a way that disrupts a school trip or visit   | To search pupils for prohibited items   |
| To prevent a pupil from leaving the classroom where this would risk their own or others safety, or disrupt the behaviour of others | If there is another more effective, less restrictive way to manage a situation  |
| To prevent a pupil from attacking someone else   | If the intervention is unlikely to reduce risk and may escalate the situation   |
| To stop a fight between pupils   |   |
| To restrain a pupil who is at risk of harming themselves through physical outburst.  |   |
| To prevent or stop a pupil from committing a criminal offence.   |   |

Staff do not need consent from parents/guardians in order to use reasonable force on a pupil. Staff should not agree to blanket requests from parents/guardians to not use reasonable force on their child, as this may be required in order to ensure the safety of pupils and staff.

### ***Guidance on Use of Reasonable Force:***

In general, where it is safe to do so, use of a non-physical restrictive intervention is preferable over a physical intervention.

The following table describes the basic principles you should adhere to when using reasonable force:

| <b>When using reasonable force, you should:</b>   | <b>When using reasonable force, you must not:</b>                       |
|---|---|
| Be satisfied that the action you take would be considered justifiable by a wider audience of professional colleagues                    | Use more force than is required in the situation                        |
| Use the minimum amount of force required for the situation, and explain to the pupil what is happening and why and what needs to happen | Cause physical pain or injury to a pupil/pupils, when this is avoidable |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| for the use of force to end. Seek to understand how the pupil is feeling and use this information to determine if the intervention should continue to be applied, reduced or stopped, if safe to do so. |  |
| Attempt other methods to de-escalate the situation, for instance issuing a verbal warning, explaining consequences for behaviour. This may not be possible in an emergency.                             | Restrict a pupil's breathing (including covering the nose and/or mouth, or applying pressure to the neck region)   |
| Consider the location and environment of the intervention is possible, maintaining respect for a pupil's dignity  | Use the "seated double embrace" which involves two members of staff forcing a person into a sitting position and leaning them forward, while a third monitors breathing      |
| Remain calm but firm  | Use the "double basket hold" which involves holding a person's arms across their chest   |
| Cease use of reasonable force where a pupil shows signs of physical distress (e.g. difficulty breathing, vomiting, changing colour)   | Use the "nose distraction technique" which involves a sharp upward jab under the nose  |
| Ask for assistance from colleagues. Pupils should not assist in restraint. You may send pupils for help if required   | Use force against the throat or head   |
| Reassure the pupil(s) involved throughout. Allow them the opportunity to calm down, and for the use of force to end   | Use force to search a pupil  |
| End the use of force as soon as possible and safe   | Hold a pupil on the ground for any longer than is necessary- any holds on the ground should be re-positioned to a safer alternative or standing position as soon as possible |
| Consider reasonable adjustments required for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)  |  |
| Seek medical assessments and treatments for any injuries as soon as possible  |  |

### ***Guidance on Use of Seclusion***

Seclusion should only be used as a safety measure, in order to prevent harm to a pupil, group of pupils or staff. Seclusion may be used when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation.

Seclusion may involve asking a student to go to a safe and non-threatening place. If the pupil does not comply with these requests, it may involve asking other pupils in the area to leave. Pupils who are secluded will be supervised by a member of staff at all times. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the use of seclusion will end and the pupil will be allowed to leave. This will be followed up in line with the section "[Following the Use of Restrictive Interventions](#)".

## ***Recording Incidents:***

Incidents where you have used reasonable force with pupils must always be reported- please see [Appendix 1](#).

Incidents where you have used other non-physical restrictive interventions must also always be reported- please see [Appendix 2](#).

Staff should speak to the DSL in their school, and report the concern via CPOMS following their school's Child Protection policy. Concerns should be reported immediately where possible, and as soon as possible where this is not practical. All reports must be made as soon as possible, but within a maximum of 1 working day.

When reporting use of reasonable force, staff should include the following information:

- Date, time and location of the incident
- Name(s) of any pupils and staff involved
- Any relevant needs and circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code.
- Description of what led up to the incident, including any steps taken before the use of reasonable force took place (such as preventative or de-escalation strategies)
- Description of the incident, including the type of force that took place and for how long
- Description of why the staff member believed reasonable force was required in the situation
- Any post-incident support, such as details of medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts.

Generally, staff are not required to report other physical contact with pupils unless there is a child protection risk. In these circumstances, a report should be made in line with the individual school's Child Protection Policy.

Following receipt of a report in CPOMS, the DSL will review and decide whether witness statements are required. If so, these will be recorded within CPOMS. The DSL will also ensure that notification to parents and any follow-up is recorded.

If required, the DSL may escalate concerns regarding staff behaviour following the procedure set out in the Staff Code of Conduct. In this instance, records will be securely stored in line with individual school procedures.

## ***Informing Parents/Guardians:***

All incidences of use of reasonable force and non-physical restrictive interventions will be reported to parents/guardians as soon as is reasonably practical, and usually on the same working day. The exception to this is where it appears that in making the report, a pupil would likely to face serious harm. In this instance, staff should consider whether there is another parent/guardian who can receive the report without resulting in significant harm, and if not then a report should be made to the local authority. The DSL in the school can support this report being made.

Reports made to parents/guardians can be made by email/telephone or any other online system that schools use in order to communicate. Reports must include, at a minimum:

- Time, date, location and approximate duration of the incident
- Brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
- If relevant, a brief account of the type of force applied, and the degree of force
- Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable

Schools must report to parents/guardians even if the restrictive intervention is agreed as part of a pupil's behaviour plan.

If schools communicate with parents/guardians by telephone, this must be followed up in writing.

Schools will likely continue to communicate with parents/guardians following the use of reasonable force. Parents/guardians may be invited to a follow up meeting to discuss the incident in more details, and how to minimise the chances of any future incidents occurring. See the section ["Following the Use of Restrictive Interventions"](#) for further information.

### ***Following The Use of Restrictive Interventions***

Following the use of restrictive interventions, schools will need to consider next steps. Initially, this will include taking immediate steps to ensure that any pupils and staff involved in an incident are safe and well supported. Medical advice and treatment should be sought if appropriate. In addition to recording any injuries in accordance with this policy, injuries should also be recorded in line with any other school procedures and reported if appropriate to the Health and Safety Executive.

Further follow up and next steps may be required after an incident. This might include:

- Holding a restorative conversation with the pupil(s), staff and parents/guardians as appropriate, exploring what happened and why and how you might move forward. These meetings will be facilitated by a member of staff who was not involved in the incident.
- Following individual school behaviour policies
- Implementing additional support for pupils, as required
- Supporting staff members involved in incidents
- Monitoring wellbeing of staff and pupils involved on a longer-term basis, and providing support if required.

This list is not exhaustive.

School leadership teams will regularly scrutinise data regarding incidences of reasonable force and look for opportunities to minimise force in the future. This will include:

- Identifying areas for improvement to policies and practices, particularly when strategies and interventions have not been effective
- Identifying areas of training and development for staff, for example on how to use de-escalation techniques effectively

- Understanding patterns or triggers or behaviour for key pupils, to better support them through the use of behaviour plans or risk assessments
- Identify when the use of force or restraint is used disproportionately with vulnerable pupils, including those with SEND.

The Thames Learning Trust trustees will regularly review and interrogate this data.

## **Pupils With SEND**

Pupils with SEND can be disproportionately subject to the use of restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force.

When a pupil's behaviour makes it more likely that staff will need to use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions, schools must conduct a risk assessment. The aim of this risk assessment is to reduce and manage risks, for example by understanding a pupil's triggers and providing additional training to staff.

When appropriate, schools will work with parents/guardians and other professionals to contribute to risk assessments. This may include a discussion of prevention and de-escalation strategies, and input into a pupil's behaviour plan which details these strategies, the types of intervention that may be used and in which circumstances.

Behaviour support plans and/or risk assessments will be reviewed regularly with the pupil and their parent/guardian. Plans and risk assessments will always be reviewed following a significant incident, so that changes can be made based on evidence of what has worked or not worked in practice with the individual pupil.

## **Other Physical Contact With Pupils:**

It is not illegal to touch pupils. In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate to have physical contact with a pupil. Examples might include:

- Holding the hand of young pupils when moving around school
- Comforting a pupil in distress
- Demonstrating physical technique, for example with a musical instrument or in a sporting activity
- To give first aid

This list is not exhaustive. Physical contact of this kind with pupils must be consensual. Staff must use their professional judgement and consider whether a wider audience of professional colleagues would consider that the level of physical contact is appropriate.

## **Searching Pupils Without Consent:**

Principals and staff authorised by the principal have the power to search a pupil or their possessions when they have reasonable grounds to suspect that they have a prohibited item. Force may be used as far as is reasonable to search for legally prohibited items. Reasonable force may not be used to

search pupils for items banned under the school rules only. Where a student does not comply with a request for such a search, schools will follow their own individual behaviour policies.

## **Guidance for Adults not Employed by the Thames Learning Trust:**

Adults who are not employed by the Thames Learning Trust, but who are working with pupils (for example Trustees or volunteers), should not use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions. Should an incident arise where it is felt that reasonable force or another restrictive intervention is required, a request for a member of staff to attend and support should be issued. This will usually be done by sending another pupil to request assistance, so as not to leave pupils unattended.

## **Complaints:**

Following the use of force, a pupil, parent/guardian or staff member may wish to make a complaint. All complaints should be made to the headteacher of the applicable school, following the [complaints policy](#).

## **Training:**

All staff will read this policy as part of their induction. In addition, all staff will receive training/guidance on the use of reasonable force at least once per year. This may be in the form of a full training session, or a staff update (e.g. through an email update, or via staff briefing). Principals may wish to provide some members of staff with additional training on reasonable force, including restraint.

If the Trust deems that a staff member has used force inappropriately, they may be required to complete additional training at the discretion of the Principal (alongside other staff disciplinary processes).

## **Communication:**

This policy should be transparent and widely available to staff, pupils and parents/guardians. As such, it will be published on the Thames Learning Trust website and will be available to access through the website of individual schools.

Any changes to the policy will be communicated to staff, pupils and parents/guardians.

## **Review:**

This policy will be reviewed at least once every three years, or more often if statutory/regulatory advice requires.

## **Related Polies, Procedures and Guidance:**

- Thames Learning Trust Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Thames Learning Trust Code of Conduct for Teaching and Support Staff and Central Staff
- Use of reasonable force: advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies
- Thames Learning Trust School Behavioural Policies

## Appendix 1: Recording of Reasonable Force

### Physical Intervention Form

Please use this form to log incidences of use of reasonable force. After speaking to your DSL, please upload this to CPOMS as soon as possible and within 1 working day.

|  |  |                                      |  |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Your name:   |  | Name of pupil who force was used on: |  |
| Name of staff present:   |  | Name of pupils present:              |  |
| Date:  |  | Time:                                |  |
| Location:  |  | Duration:                            |  |
| Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code:                                       |  |                                      |  |
| Description of situation leading to use of reasonable force, including any steps to de-escalate the situation (e.g. verbal advice and support, negotiation, reminders of consequences etc):                      |  |                                      |  |
| Description of the use of force that took place (what you did and said), including the degree of force and why you feel this was required (e.g. risk to self, risk to others, risk to physical environment etc): |  |                                      |  |
| Outcome/effectiveness of the use of force:   |  |                                      |  |

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|   |
| Details of any injuries sustained to anyone involved:   |
| Details of any post-incident support, including medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts:          |
| Details of external agencies informed (E.g. medical professionals, LADO, parent/guardian, police, social worker): |
| Views of the young person:  |
| Any additional comments:  |

## **Appendix 2: Recording of Non-Physical Restrictive Interventions**

### **Non-Physical Restrictive Intervention Form**

Please use this form to log incidences of use of non-physical restrictive interventions. After speaking to your DSL, please upload this to CPOMS as soon as possible and within 1 working day.

|   |  |                                      |  |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Your name:  |  | Name of pupil who force was used on: |  |
| Name of staff present:  |  | Name of pupils present:              |  |
| Date:   |  | Time:                                |  |
| Location:   |  | Duration:                            |  |
| Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code:                  |  |                                      |  |
| Description of situation leading to use of the intervention, including any steps to de-escalate the situation (e.g. verbal advice and support, negotiation, reminders of consequences etc): |  |                                      |  |
| Description of the intervention that took place (what you did and said) and why you feel this was required (e.g. risk to self, risk to others, risk to physical environment etc):           |  |                                      |  |
| Outcome/effectiveness of the intervention:  |  |                                      |  |

Details of any injuries sustained to anyone involved:

Details of any post-incident support, including medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts:

Details of external agencies informed (E.g. medical professionals, LADO, parent/guardian, police, social worker):

Views of the young person:

Any additional comments: