



Defence
Children
Services

DCS Directive 3.2.12

Restrictive Interventions and Reasonable Force in DCS Schools and Settings

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General

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Related Policy/Guidance	DCS Policy Directive 3.2.10 Behaviour in DCS Schools and Settings
	DfE Behaviour in Schools - Advice for Head Teachers and School Staff Feb 2024
	DCS Policy Directive 3 2 1 Safeguarding
	DCS Policy Directive 3.2.9 Exclusion and Suspension from DCS Schools and Settings

Introduction

1. DCS believes that every child and young person has a right to be treated with respect and dignity, deserve to have their needs recognised and be given the right support. All School or Setting staff need to be able to safely manage behaviour and understand what a Child or Young Person (CYP) is seeking to communicate through behaviours.
2. 'School staff' refers to anyone working or volunteering in a DCS School or Setting who has control or charge of children. 'Child' refers to any CYP under 18 attending any DCS School or Setting. The term 'parent' refers to all those with parental and caring responsibilities for CYP (as defined by section 576 of the Education Act 1996).
3. DCS believes that every member of staff needs to know the difference between other physical contact, used to describe contact between staff and a child/ren where no force is involved (e.g. comfort, affirmation, facilitation, guiding), and the terms restrictive interventions
4. DCS understands that children have the right to inclusion (including those with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010) and to grow towards independence with the ability to make choices. We seek to provide opportunities for personal growth and to enhance emotional health and wellbeing.
5. Behaviour that challenges is a communication or consequence of unmet need/s. A number of factors may contribute to Children and Young People (CYP) presenting with behaviour that challenges including learning difficulties and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Incidents should lead to consideration of both environmental and pupil factors contributing to the incident, as well as adaptations and support.
6. The use of restrictive interventions will only be needed for a very small minority of CYP. The use of restraint and other restrictive interventions are traumatising, and this is

particularly so for children, who are still developing both physically and emotionally. The use of restraint and restrictive interventions can have long-term consequences on the health and wellbeing of children and young people. It can also have a negative impact on staff who carry out such interventions and for children who witness it.

7. CYP with learning difficulties, communication differences, autistic spectrum conditions or social and mental health difficulties may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. This can lead to pupils with special educational needs (SEN) being disproportionately subject to the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions. Wherever possible, restrictive interventions should be avoided and person-centred, proactive, preventative, non-restrictive approaches adopted.

8. There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in Schools and Settings to use reasonable force to safeguard children. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children. 'Reasonable' in these circumstances means 'using no more force than is needed.'

9. There are other occasions where physical contact is appropriate to provide practical assistance or caregiving. However, this must be used only where necessary and be proportionate to the situation and respectful of the CYP's wishes and personal space and in accordance with paragraph 30. The nature of the contact must not be open to misinterpretation.

10. DCS Schools and Settings should develop and implement a policy on the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions. This may be contained within the School or Setting's Behaviour Policy or a standalone document. It should be accessible to all, consistent and straightforward to follow.

11. It must include details on the legal power and limitations of School or Setting staff to use reasonable force and the procedures for recording and reporting significant incidents. It must be aligned with the School or Settings legal duties regarding the welfare of children including the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

Information

12. This Policy Directive¹ aligns with the following legislation and DfE guidance:

- a. Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools
Guidance for schools in England 2026, The Education Act 1996², The Education and Inspections Act 2006³
- b. DfE Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework 2024⁴
- c. DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools Jul 2022⁵

¹ An EQIA has been conducted for this Policy Directive and is available on request.

² [Link](#)

³ [Link](#)

⁴ [Link](#)

⁵ [Link](#)

- d. DfE: Guidance on Use of Reasonable Force (Revised) February 2025
- e. DfE and DHSC: Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention, July 2019⁶
- f. DfE: Keeping Children safe in Education, September 2025: Keeping children safe in education
- g. DfE: mental health and behaviour in schools November 2018:
- h. DfE: Behaviour in Schools. Advice for head teachers and school staff, February 2024
- i. The Equality Act 2010
- j. Behaviour in schools - How school staff can develop a behaviour policy 16 July 2013
- k. Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice- Code of practice giving guidance for decisions made under the Mental Capacity Act 2005. 22 July 2013. (Last updated 14 October 2020)

13. This Policy Directive emphasises the importance of prevention and de-escalation as a means of minimising the need to use reasonable force and other restrictive interventions. It sets out the specific whole School or Setting measures that they should use to minimise the need for reasonable force and other restrictive interventions as well as tailored approaches for individual pupils.

Legal context

14. The circumstances when reasonable force may be used will need to meet the following criteria as determined by Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006:

- a. To prevent a child from committing a criminal offence (this applies even if they are below the age of criminal responsibility)
- b. To prevent a child from injuring themselves or others
- c. To prevent or stop a CYP from causing serious damage to property (including their own property)

15. The decision on whether it is reasonable to use force and/or other restrictive interventions, as defined in this document, depends on the individual circumstances of each situation. In assessing whether force and/or other restrictive interventions are reasonable in a situation, the member of staff should use their professional judgement.

16. The DfE guidance 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools, guidance for schools 2026' states that reasonable force is a legal term which includes physical restrictive interventions. Reasonable force means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time. The application of it depends on the circumstances. Head Teachers, Setting Managers and authorised staff can use such force

⁶ [Link](#)

to conduct a search for 'prohibited items'. Force cannot be used to search for items banned under the School or Setting rules.

17. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 and related DfE guidance makes clear that all members of School or Setting staff can legally use reasonable force in limited circumstances, and that the power extends to any person the Head Teacher or Setting Manager has put in charge of pupils, such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying students on a School or Setting organised visit.

Terminology

18. The term 'other physical contact' is used to describe contact between staff and a child (or children) where no force is involved. This might include:

- a. to guide or escort pupils to a safe place when they can regulate
- b. holding the hand of a pupil at the front/back of the line when going to assembly
- c. when walking together around the school or on a school trip
- d. when helping a pupil to a space they have chosen to access to self-regulate

19. Restrictive intervention in this Policy Directive refers to 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 intended to restrain pupils in different ways.

20. Restraint is a legal term referring to a non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement and might include direct physical contact. Holding a pupil's arms at their sides for example or removing a pupil's crutches would be considered forms of restraint.

21. Staff must have reasonable grounds for believing that restraint is necessary to justify its use and only used where it is necessary to prevent serious harm, such to prevent injury to the CYP or others. Professional judgement should determine if restraint is necessary, reasonable and proportionate.

22. Seclusion is defined as the supervised confinement and isolation of a pupil, away from other pupils, in an area the pupil is prevented from leaving of their own volition and could be seen as deprivation of liberty. Removal is distinct from seclusion and is defined by the DfE Behaviour in Schools guidance document⁷ as where a pupil, for serious disciplinary reasons, is required to spend a limited time out of the classroom at the instruction of a member of staff, in a setting where they can continue their education.

23. Staff should only put a pupil in seclusion to protect others from harm, such as when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. The pupil should be supervised for the duration of the seclusion. When the immediate risk of harm is reduced, the pupil should be allowed to leave the secluded area.

⁷ [Link](#)

24. Deprivation of liberty is unlawful unless sanctioned by process of law (Mental Health Act 1983, Mental Capacity Act 2005. Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards) and / or by way of court order (inherent jurisdiction or s16 Mental Capacity Act Order); Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice.⁸

Underpinning Principles

25. Staff have a duty to intervene in order to prevent pupils from committing a criminal offence, hurting themselves or others or damaging property. Furthermore, DCS Schools and Settings must take seriously their duty of care to pupils, employees and visitors.

- a. The primary consideration is the welfare of the children in the care of DCS Schools and Settings.
- b. The secondary one is the welfare and protection of the adults who look after them including volunteers and contractors

26. Restrictive interventions should only be used when there is no alternative, less intrusive course of action and with due regard to the fact that when a child is dysregulated, they are likely to be especially sensitive to any physical intervention, including blocking their path, risking escalation of the situation.

27. Staff should consider whether there are reasonable alternative ways to manage a situation and achieve the desired outcome. Staff should assess whether the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks, or whether its use would escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the consequences of the behaviour that it intends to address. Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.

28. Staff should use the least amount of force or restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce the relevant risks. Staff should consider the personal circumstances of the pupil such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.

29. There are occasions when restrictive interventions are an appropriate and reasonable response to the risks presented in a particular situation. However restrictive interventions should only be used in the context of wider policies and procedures which:

- a. promote positive behaviour
- b. adopt a child-centred approach
- c. create a supportive environment which seeks to address factors contributing to behaviour which challenges
- d. prevent and de-escalate situations to avoid the need for physical intervention

30. Not all children feel comfortable with certain types of physical contact, this should be recognised and, wherever possible, adults should seek the child's permission before

⁸ [Link](#)

initiating contact and be sensitive to any signs that they may be uncomfortable or embarrassed

31. All staff can use restrictive intervention and restraint to maintain safety in an emergency which is consistent with the principles of common law.

32. Members of staff should not be required or advised to conduct any form of physical intervention or restraint which will put them at unnecessary risk.

33. It is not possible to be specific about the appropriateness of each physical contact, since an action that is appropriate with one child, in certain circumstances, may be inappropriate in other circumstances, or with a different child. In all situations where physical contact between staff and children takes place, staff must have regard to the following:

- a. the child's age and level of understanding.
- b. the child's individual characteristics and history.
- c. the duration of contact.
- d. the location where the contact takes place (it should not take place in private without others present)
- e. the purpose of the physical contact.

34. Safeguarding children should involve a professional understanding of the ways in which touch should be used appropriately in care and education settings.

35. Since children are developing both physically and psychologically this makes them particularly vulnerable. Therefore, the child's best interests are the prime consideration when considering the restraint of a child. However, the child's best interests do not automatically take precedence over other considerations such as other people's rights, but careful thought must be given to it.

Before using Restrictive Intervention and Restraint

36. DCS Schools and Settings will seek to understand the underlying triggers of behaviour that challenges so they can provide proactive support, create an inclusive environment and consider the impact of the School or Setting policies on pupils with SEND.

37. DCS Schools and Settings will consider how the School or Setting culture and environment may be experienced differently by pupils with SEND and seek to support pupils to cope with situations that they may find distressing.

38. DCS Schools and Settings will utilise staff who know individual pupils well to help identify and manage risk such as trigger points when behaviour that challenges is more likely to occur and develop proactive strategies to reduce the likelihood of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions being used.

39. DCS Schools and Settings will also work with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

40. Effective action must be taken to reduce and mitigate risk by:

- a. removing stimuli that may be causing distress
- b. changing body language, facial expression, and/or tone of voice
- c. supporting the pupil to express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- d. engaging the pupil in an activity which can help them manage their feelings
- e. distracting the pupil in something that interests them or by introducing familiar objects and activities to redirect their attention
- f. offering reassurance
- g. showing care and concern by acknowledging their feelings and encouraging reflection and supporting them to understand their emotions.
- h. removing an audience or taking vulnerable pupils to a safe place.
- i. making the environment safer by moving furniture and removing objects
- j. using adapted communications such as non-verbal communication
- k. guiding and escorting pupils to a safe space or somewhere they can regulate.

41. De-escalation strategies are adapted in Early Years Settings for the age and stage of the child. Distress in the Early Years can lead to 'lashing out' and other potentially harmful expressions of frustration, anxiety and aggression. There may be a prevalence of communication difficulties especially where English is a second language, or where there are language developmental delays and with children who are non-verbal leading to behaviour difficulties. De-escalation strategies for Early Years focus on examples such as:

- a. modelling calmness
- b. reducing stimulation
- c. using adapted communications such as non-verbal communication
- d. meeting unmet basic needs e.g. a child needing to sleep
- e. removing the audience and supporting the distressed child

42. Specific training for Early Years staff is provided at induction or as part of ongoing training plans and provides all staff with the knowledge, skills and judgement required to manage crisis behaviour. In the Early Years context, the use of physical intervention is an absolute last resort where prevention fails to keep young children safe from distressed behaviour which may be harmful.

43. All DCS Schools and Setting leaders will be provided with training and resources in universal relational approaches to understanding behaviour. This will be delivered annually by the DCS EPSL team. School leaders will cascade and oversee the delivery of this whole school approach, determining whether full-day or refresher training is required.

44. DCS Schools and Settings staff will also have access to 'Anchored Together: Resilience and Wellbeing' training developed by DCS Senior Educational Psychologists, to develop understanding of how to support the wellbeing of children and young people.

45. In addition, DCS schools and settings will have access to Team Teach Level 1 training, which focuses on de-escalation and preventative approaches, including a limited introduction to non-restrictive techniques such as guiding, escorting and basic breakaway skills. Team Teach Level 2 training will only be considered where there is clear evidence, robust justification and an audited need demonstrating that a child requires a higher level of restrictive intervention and would be provided to a small number of identified staff only.

46. If a School or Setting identifies a need for training on restrictive interventions in addition to that outlined above, the School or Setting should inform the SEND Lead (or District AH) who will explore additional or alternative training options.

Using Restrictive Interventions

47. Restrictive interventions are never to be used for the purpose of punishment, or to inflict pain. All forms of corporal punishment are prohibited. Physical contact must not be made with the CYP's neck, chest, abdomen, genital area, or any other sensitive body areas, or to put pressure on joints.

48. In DCS Schools and Settings restrictive interventions are only used when there is no realistic alternative and for the shortest amount of time possible. We expect staff to conduct either a dynamic risk assessment or use a written risk assessment. Staff must think creatively about alternatives to physical intervention. The paramount consideration is that the action is taken in the interest of the child and that it reduces rather than increases risk. All staff should focus on promoting a positive and proactive approach to behaviour and emotional wellbeing, including de-escalation techniques (appropriate to the child), to minimise the likelihood of, and avoid the need to use, restraint.

49. Staff should consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. For example, pupils who have experienced an adverse life event, with diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, past trauma or neglect, communication difficulties, or other needs, may find the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions particularly distressing. Staff should seek to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity. This may include, where possible, considering the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.

50. Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and explain what the pupil needs to do. For pupils with difficulties with speech, language and communication, or with English as an additional language, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies should be used to ensure the pupil understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.

51. Staff should seek to understand how the pupil is feeling and use this information to determine whether the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

52. Every effort should be made to secure a minimum of two trained members of staff present before applying restrictive intervention and restraint. Other staff can act as assistants or witnesses. To avoid intimidation, Schools and Settings should:

- a. avoid having more adults present than necessary.
- b. ensure that once safe, the physical intervention should be relaxed to allow the child to regain self control
- c. ensure that restrictive intervention and restraint is an act of care and control, not punishment.
- d. ensure that restrictive intervention and restraint are not used purely to force compliance with staff instructions when there is no immediate danger to people and property.
- e. after the event, the incident must be recorded and discussed with parents (and child if appropriate) at the earliest opportunity.

53. Staff should always avoid touching or holding a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent. In exceptional circumstances, when there is an immediate risk of injury, for example preventing a pupil running on to a busy road, hitting someone or throwing something with intent to harm. Staff may need to take any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of 'reasonable force.'

54. In other circumstances, staff should never act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:

- a. holding a pupil around the neck or in a way that might restrict breathing
- b. slapping, punching, kicking, tripping or forcing limbs against a joint
- c. holding or pulling a pupil by the hair
- d. holding a pupil face down on the ground
- e. forcing a CYP up or down stairs
- f. dragging a CYP from a confined space
- g. lifting and carrying
- h. enforced seclusion (as outlined in paragraphs 19 and 20) requires a court order except in an emergency

55. Procedures should be in place, through the pastoral system of the school, for supporting and debriefing CYP and staff after every incident of restrictive intervention, as it is essential to safeguard the emotional well-being of all involved at these times.

Support available to Schools and Settings

56. Schools and Settings can access advice and support from the Education Psychology Speech and Language (EPSL) Team which includes an Educational Psychologist, a Speech and Language Therapist and a SEND Adviser.

57. The EPSL team are able to provide training for staff on various aspects of behaviour, including:

- a. understanding behaviour
- b. managing behaviour that challenges
- c. conflict resolution
- d. de-escalation techniques
- e. how to produce individual, person-centred Positive Behaviour Support Plans
- f. relational practices

Restrictive intervention

58. If a child is identified as presenting a risk that restraint or restrictive intervention may be required, an ISP must be completed **as well as** a Positive Behaviour Support Plan. This plan will help staff to avoid situations that escalate through understanding the factors that influence the behaviour and identify the early warning signs in an effort to manage and reduce risk. The Positive Behaviour Support Plan might include:

- a. an exploration of the link between experiences, feelings and presenting behaviours of the CYP
- b. anxiety analysis to understand the factors that underlie or influence the behaviour as well as the triggers for it (e.g. staff, peers, activity, location etc)
- c. analysis of behaviour with solutions and differentiation of environment or teaching and learning
- d. an understanding of the wider causes of behaviours, such as those that stem from medical conditions, sensory issues and unmet need or undiagnosed conditions
- e. recognition of the early warning signs that indicate that poor emotional wellbeing is beginning to emerge
- f. alternatives to restraint, including effective techniques to de-escalate a situation and avoid restrictive interventions
- g. details of the safe implementation of restraint, including how to minimise associated risks, particularly taking into account the growth and development of children and young people
- h. details of a communication plan for those who are non-verbal (including those with speech, language and communication needs)
- i. co-produced with parents/carers and the child to ensure their views and experiences are considered
- j. a dynamic risk assessment to ensure staff and others act reasonably, consider the risks, and learn from what happens
- k. an explanation of how to record any planned or unplanned interventions

- l. a clear description stating at which point a restrictive intervention will be used
- m. identification of key staff who know exactly what is expected and how to build positive relationships
- n. any adjustments, such as to address aspects of the school environment which the pupil finds challenging and ways for pupils to communicate their needs effectively
- o. detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil

59. The DCS Educational Psychologist and SEND Advisor should be involved in the Positive Behaviour Support Plan process. Positive behaviour support plans support children at specialist tier of graduated response to behaviour framework

60. Any Positive Behaviour Support Plans should be reviewed with the pupil and their parents periodically and following any significant incident, so that changes can be made based on evidence of what has worked and what has not worked in practice for the individual pupil.

61. Where a pupil has a disability, DCS Schools and Settings have a duty under the Equality Act 2010, to take reasonable steps to avoid disadvantage and ensure that the pupil can fully participate in the education provided by the School or Setting.

62. When the Individual Support Plan indicates the likely need for School or Setting staff to use planned restrictive intervention and restraint with a child to prevent an injury, the School or Setting should record this in a Physical Intervention and Restraint Plan. The information in the plan will outline:

- a. who has been consulted about the plan
- b. the type of physical intervention to be used
- c. which adults are authorised to use this intervention
- d. parental consent for the plan
- e. the Head Teacher or Setting Manager (or nominated deputy) authorisation for the plan

63. Before implementing a planned restraint or restrictive intervention, it is necessary to undertake a careful risk assessment. This will need to include a record of the child's needs (including their vulnerabilities, learning difficulties, medical conditions and impairments), evidence of the risks to self and others and the extent to which a restrictive intervention would be in the child's best interests.

Recording And Reporting the Use of Reasonable Force

64. DCS Schools and Settings **must** record and report each significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil. (**Annex B**). Additionally, the incident must be recorded on CPoms within 24 hours.

65. A significant incident refers to any situation where the use of reasonable force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff as described in 'Other forms of physical contact' section of this Policy Directive.

66. The format for a Restrictive Intervention and Restraint Plan is included in **Annex A**. If restrictive intervention and restraint has been used, whether in a planned or unplanned way, Schools and Settings **must** record this within the Restrictive Intervention Reporting Form (**Annex B**). It should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day. This form includes a summary of the post incident support. A copy of the completed report must be sent to the SEND Manager and the District AH.

67. Parents need to be informed if their child is the subject of a restrictive intervention including details of the nature of the intervention and be given an explanation as to why it was necessary.

68. Following each significant incident, DCS Schools and Settings **must** ensure that a procedure is in place for also sharing a copy of the Restrictive Intervention and Restraint Reporting Form with parents as soon as practicable and no later than the same day except where:

- a. the pupil is aged 20 or over or

69. doing so may result in significant harm to the pupil, including all forms of abuse and neglect. In this instance, the staff member must report the incident as soon as possible and no later than the same day to the DCS SAFE team following the standard safeguarding procedures.

70. DCS Schools and Settings can choose how best to share this information with parents. Best practice would include inviting parents to have a follow-up discussion about the incident where appropriate and might include:

- a. a discussion about any behavioural triggers
- b. any warning signs of an impending incident
- c. whether any agreed behaviour support plans were followed
- d. what de-escalation strategies were used and how effective they were
- e. what might be done differently in the future

71. DCS governing boards and proprietors should regularly review (no less than quarterly) and interrogate data on restrictive interventions and have oversight of procedures, recording and reporting the use of force and seclusion in DCS Schools and Settings to:

- a. identify and implement improvements to policies and practices, particularly where approaches have been used for some time but have not been effective
- b. identify areas of learning and development for school staff, supporting specific departments and teachers to improve understanding and practice

- c. understand pupils' repeat patterns and triggers to interrogate the effectiveness of pupil support measures, share this information with teachers who work with those pupils to better support them and, where appropriate, their parents, to establish a behaviour support plan or revise an existing plan
- d. identify any disproportionate use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions in relation to pupils who share protected characteristics, have SEND, or other types of vulnerability

72. In the unlikely event that the restrictive intervention relates to or results in a serious incident threshold (meaning a child has died, been seriously harmed, or there is a major safeguarding breach) the school or setting must comply with JSP834 including contacting the Social Care Provider in location. The DCS Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) can be contacted for further information on RC-DCS-HQ-SAFE@mod.gov.uk.

Post incident support

73. Any incident involving restrictive intervention or restraint is likely to be highly emotional and distressing for all pupils and staff involved, whether they are involved directly or as observers. Support should always be made available to the staff and pupils involved. This should be offered in a timely manner when individuals are sufficiently calm to be able to talk about the incident.

74. Following each significant incident involving the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive intervention, DCS Schools and Settings will evaluate the incident to understand why reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions were used and how other restrictive interventions might be avoided in future.

75. It is important for staff and pupil wellbeing to understand why restrictive intervention or restraint was used by holding follow up conversations to allow for reflection and learning. Pupils should be encouraged to explain how they felt about it, the triggers for their behaviour as well as repairing and rebuilding relationships through dialogue.

76. These conversations will be adapted for the individual pupil taking into consideration their physical and emotional stage of development and any SEND needs. This information can then contribute to the new Positive Behaviour Support Plan and Physical Intervention and Restraint Plan.

77. DCS Schools and Settings will foster a culture of continuous improvement and consider how things might be improved in the future by engaging in a process of reflection and learning following any significant incident.

78. Pastoral support will also be offered to any pupil who witnesses an incident of reasonable force and/or restrictive intervention where a peer may have been injured or become distressed.

79. The support given to staff and pupils should be recorded in the follow-up action section of the Incident Involving Restrictive Intervention or Restraint Form.

Unplanned incidents of Restrictive intervention

80. In an unexpected, emergency situation, the member of staff must make an immediate dynamic risk assessment of risk and act accordingly to maintain the safety of all involved.

81. The procedures outlined above for recording the incident, informing parents, support for those involved and future risk assessment should all be followed.
82. School and Setting staff will not be expected to act in a way which puts them at risk of injury.
83. It will be helpful for staff if unplanned incidents are considered in the school's annual staff training on behaviour management.
84. In an emergency, such as a child running into a road, or a child attacking a member of staff and refusing to stop when asked or when the staff member has safely moved away, then reasonable force may be necessary. This would be an unplanned intervention which:
- a. requires professional judgement to be exercised in difficult situations, often requiring split-second decisions in response to unforeseen events or incidents where trained staff may not be on hand
 - b. will include judgements about the capacity of the child at that moment to make themselves safe
 - c. requires responses which are reasonable and proportionate and use the minimum force necessary in order to achieve the aim of the decision to restrain
85. Depending on the circumstances, following an unplanned intervention DCS Schools and Settings should contact either their DCS Educational Psychologist or SEND Advisor for advice. This might result in a multi-agency discussion to consider the support needed to reduce the risk of future incidents. Staff might need to update and/or implement a new behaviour support plan depending on the circumstances of the unplanned incident.

Other Forms of Physical Contact

86. DCS Schools and Settings should not have a 'no contact' policy. Nor should they grant any requests by parents or staff members to not use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions. The adoption of a 'no contact' policy at a School or Setting can leave staff unable to intervene where reasonable in the circumstances to fully protect pupils. School leaders should adopt sensible policies which allow and support their staff to make appropriate physical contact.
87. There are occasions when it is appropriate for staff to have contact or physical intervention with children or young people, however, it is crucial that this aligns with their professional role in relation to the child's individual needs. Occasions where staff may have cause to have physical intervention with a child may include:
- a. to comfort a child in distress (so long as this is appropriate to their age)
 - b. for affirmation/praise
 - c. to gently direct a CYP
 - d. for curricular reasons (for example in PE, Drama, etc)
 - e. for First Aid and medical treatment

- f. in an emergency to avert danger to the child

88. Physical intervention must not become a habit between a member of staff and a child and should always be in the child's best interest. Staff must have an awareness of children and young people who may not have secure primary attachments. There is a need to differentiate physical intervention to ensure that children or young people are able to distinguish and separate the attachment to staff (who are transient adults in their life) from the primary attachment to key adults such as parents and siblings.

89. In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate, the member of staff must use their professional judgement as well as follow the school or setting child protection (or any other relevant) policy. They must consider the circumstances such as other adults being present, the pupil's age, vulnerabilities such as SEND and determine if alternative strategies are more appropriate.

90. **Early Years.** Affectionate, loving, and positive touch in the Early Years is essential to healthy growth and development. Withholding appropriate physical touch and comfort would deny young children having their basic needs met. Loving and positive touch will be necessary to support all care-giving procedures such as intimate care, helping children to sleep and comforting children when they are distressed.

91. It is illegal to use force on a pupil as punishment. Pupils should not be restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation, for example, by covering the mouth and/or nose, or applying pressure to the neck region or abdomen. The use of force can be dangerous, particularly where it occurs on the ground. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their holds or re-position into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible. Where appropriate, the pupil should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries immediately. For any form of restraint, including seated and standing, there is a risk of physical and psychological harm, and it should be avoided where possible.

92. Any incident involving unacceptable practice or intervention that may have compromised a child's safety, must be reported immediately in line with the allegations of abuse against staff. The school must follow JSP834 and contact the Social Care Provider in location⁹. See DCS CPD hub for further information.¹⁰

Complaints

93. All staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school or education setting's safeguarding arrangements.

94. Appropriate whistleblowing procedures must be outlined in staff training and staff behaviour policies, in order that concerns can be raised with the school or settings senior leadership team.

⁹ See DCS CPD hub for further information [Course: Reducing Restrictive Intervention - Understanding the use of reasonable force | DLE](#)

95. If staff members have concerns about another staff member, this should be referred to the Head Teacher or Setting Manager. Concerns about the Head Teacher or Setting Manager must be referred to the Chair of the SGC and/or the AH Cyprus/ROW.

Restrictive Intervention and Restraint Plan
(Official-Sensitive Personal when complete)

Name of Pupil:	Date:
State why the child or young person requires a RIARP:	
What are the behaviours that challenge and what is the level of concern (comment on frequency and impact):	
Details of preventative strategies and environmental adaptations:	
Known environmental stressors and triggers for difficulties:	
Early signs of dysregulation:	
De-escalation strategies that may be used at an early stage:	
Later signs of dysregulation:	

De-escalation strategies that may be used at a later stage:

Exit strategies:

Detail the hold or holds that would be used (if there were a need to hold the pupil firmly to prevent harm to themselves or others).

Details of strategies for recovery and repair of relationships.

Details of the person(s) who are authorised by the Head Teacher/Setting Manager to hold the pupil if necessary.

Name(s):

.....

.....

I, the parent/carer of have discussed this plan and agree to being held safely if their staff assess that there is no alternative for their own safety or the safety of others.

Signed:

Date (Parent/Carer)

On behalf of the staff ofSchool/Setting, I undertake to ensure that we inform the parents/carers of on each occasion that we have to hold safely.

Signed:

(Head Teacher / Setting Manager)

Date:

Restrictive Intervention and Restraint Incident Report
(To be completed within 24 hours of the incident)
(Official-Sensitive Personal when complete)

School or Setting:

Date of Incident:

Time of Incident:

Pupil(s) Involved:

Age of pupil(s):

Pupil(s) SEND status or other vulnerabilities:

Details of any medical conditions:

Pupil's first language:

Location of incident:

Staff Involved:

Pupil Witnesses:

Circumstances leading up to the incident:

Describe all attempts to de-escalate the situation and avoid using a restrictive intervention:

Details of the incident:

Reason for restrictive intervention:

Could the pupil/staff be reasonably assumed to be at risk of injury? YES/NO

Could other children be reasonably assumed to be at risk of injury? YES/NO

Could it be reasonably assumed that property was about to be damaged? YES/NO

Was the child trying to run away? YES/NO

Was this used as part of a planned intervention? YES/NO

(If yes, please attach the Restrictive Intervention and Restraint Plan.)

Detail the type of restrictive intervention used:

Number of staff involved (each should record their actions separately and attach such records to this form.)

How long was the pupil held (if applicable):

Describe pupil's behaviour from release of hold until supervision was handed over to someone else, or normal activities were resumed:

Signed **Dated**

(To be signed by individual involved in restricted intervention)

:

Follow Up Action of Incident Involving Restrictive Intervention or Restraint

Copy to be sent to the District AH and SEND Manager

(Official-Sensitive Personal when complete)

Notification To Parents of Incident:

Date time..... By whom:

Post Incident Support for Member of Staff:

By whom: Date:

Post Incident Support for Pupil:

By whom: Date:

Head Teacher's Overview of the Incident:

Could other preventative measures have been used? YES/NO

Were reactive strategies effective? YES/NO

Is the risk assessment still valid? YES/NO

Should the plan be adapted? YES/NO

Signed: **Date:**

Admin use only (to be deleted when complete)

TEMPLATE LETTER TO INFORM PARENTS OF AN INCIDENT

(Official-Sensitive Personal when complete)

Dear (*parent / carer*)

Further to our earlier telephone conversation, I am writing to confirm our discussion about the incident today. As discussed, it was deemed necessary to use a restrictive intervention [*ensure this reflects the incident*] with..... [*CYP name*]. You will be aware that such an intervention is used in our setting only as a last resort, where other interventions and de-escalation techniques have not been sufficient. As already shared with you, it was felt by staff involved that it was a necessary, proportionate and appropriate response at the time in order to keep your child/young person (*delete as appropriate*) and everyone else safe.

In line with our policy and procedures, I am sharing the detail of the incident with you:

Time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention:	
Why the intervention was assessed as necessary:	
What type of force was applied, and the degree of force:	
Any physical injuries sustained [<i>delete if not applicable</i>]	

It is important that we continue to work together, going forward. I would like to invite you to a meeting to *write / review* a risk assessment and support plan for [*CYP name*] and we can discuss the matter in more detail then.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher/Setting Manager (*delete as appropriate*)

RECORDING AND REPORTING CHECKLIST¹¹

- **Did staff use force on a pupil?** (Examples include holding, guiding beyond ordinary physical contact, blocking, separating pupils, physically preventing movement.)
- **Was it a significant incident?**¹² (If yes, record it in writing as soon as practicable, and no later than the same day, including if it is already agreed in a behaviour support plan. Then report it to parents as soon as practicable, ideally the same day, unless reporting would be likely to cause serious harm to the pupil.)
- **Was the pupil secluded?**¹³ (If yes, record and report it. This applies whether or not force was used.)
- **Was there restraint without force?** (Examples could include limiting movement without direct physical contact, such as removing a walking aid.) If yes, record and report it under the seclusion/restraint procedure.

Parent reporting checklist. Tell parents:

- when and where it happened
- how long it lasted
- why it was necessary
- what intervention was used
- any injuries, if applicable

Use the incident to review behaviour triggers, behaviour support plans, SEND adjustments, staff training, de-escalation, and to consider any patterns, trends or disproportionate use.

¹¹ The DfE guidance April 2026 replaces the 2013 reasonable force guidance

¹² A significant incident is where force goes beyond ordinary appropriate physical contact.

¹³ Seclusion means keeping a pupil confined away from others and preventing them from leaving by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they leave.