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St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Restrictive Interventions and Safer Handling Policy

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Learn together and grow in God's love

Aspiration - Compassion - Community - Faith - Respect – Responsibility

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Section 1: Aims and Values

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we set high expectations for behaviour and are relentlessly positive in our approach. Our school values of Aspiration, Compassion, Community, Faith, Respect and Responsibility, and our mission to "Learn together and grow in God's love", underpin everything we do, including how we support children when their behaviour becomes unsafe.

We understand that there may be occasions when a child's behaviour is unsafe for themselves or others. We always try to understand why a child behaves in the way they do, and respond in a way that is sensitive to the individual. On rare occasions, staff may need to use a restrictive intervention, such as reasonable force, to keep everyone safe. This policy explains when and how this may happen, and what we will do afterwards.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Keep every member of our school community safe from harm
- Minimise the need to use restrictive interventions, through positive relationships, prevention and de-escalation
- Protect pupils from any form of physical intervention that is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful
- Make sure that, when a restrictive intervention is needed, it is used safely, lawfully and for the shortest possible time, with respect for the child's dignity and welfare
- Give staff the training, information and support they need to act confidently and appropriately
- Make sure every significant incident is recorded and reported to parents/carers, as the law requires, and that we learn from every incident

This policy should be read alongside our Relationships and Positive Behaviour Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, SEND Policy, Missing Child Policy and Health and Safety Policy.

Section 2: Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) guidance "Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools" (April 2026), which replaced the DfE's "Use of reasonable force" advice (2013) from 1 April 2026. The part of the guidance on recording and reporting the use of force is statutory guidance, which the governing board must have regard to.

The policy is also based on the following legislation:

- Sections 93 and 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which give all school staff the power to use reasonable force, and require schools to record and report significant incidents of the use of force
- The Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025, which require schools to record and report incidents of seclusion and restraint
- Sections 550ZA and 550ZB of the Education Act 1996, on searching pupils for prohibited items
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and the public sector equality duty

It also takes account of:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)
- Behaviour in Schools: advice for headteachers and school staff (2024)
- Searching, screening and confiscation: advice for schools (2022)
- The SEND Code of Practice (2015)
- Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention (DfE and Department of Health and Social Care, 2019)

Section 3: Definitions

In this policy, we use the following terms, in line with the DfE guidance:

- **Restrictive intervention:** any action that prevents, restricts or subdues the movement of a pupil's body, or part of their body. This is the umbrella term for both physical and non-physical interventions
- **Reasonable force:** the legal term for physical restrictive interventions. "Reasonable" means using no more force than is necessary, for the least amount of time, depending on the circumstances. Force may be used to **control** a pupil (for example, standing between pupils, blocking a pupil's path, or leading a pupil by the arm) or to **restrain** them (holding back or bringing a pupil under control, for example when two pupils are fighting)
- **Restraint:** a non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not involve physical contact – for example, holding a pupil's arms to their sides, or removing a pupil's walking aid, would both be restraint
- **Seclusion:** a non-disciplinary intervention in which a pupil is kept in a place away from others and prevented from leaving – whether by being physically blocked or obstructed, or by being made to believe they will be punished if they try to leave. A locked door is not needed for it to be seclusion
- **Significant incident:** any incident where the use of force goes beyond the appropriate physical contact described in Section 7 of this policy. This includes using physical force to carry out a non-physical restrictive intervention
- **Safer handling:** the name of the training our staff receive, and of our approach to using reasonable force safely. Safer handling puts de-escalation first and teaches staff safe, approved techniques to use only when they are needed

Section 4: Our Approach – Prevention and De-escalation

Our first priority is always to prevent situations from reaching the point where a restrictive intervention might be needed. Most behaviour at St Joseph's is managed through positive relationships and our Relationships and Positive Behaviour Policy.

Whole-School Measures

- Building strong, trusting relationships between staff and pupils
- Creating calm classrooms and communal spaces, with clear routines and consistent expectations, including well-supervised corridors and playgrounds
- Teaching children to recognise and manage their feelings through our wellbeing curriculum and the Zones of Regulation, with Zones of Regulation tables in classrooms and around the school
- Offering calm, safe spaces, such as the Eden room, where children can choose to go to regulate with an adult
- Using restorative approaches to repair relationships and learn from incidents
- Training staff in effective communication and de-escalation, such as tone of voice, body language and empathy
- Recording and analysing information about the use of restrictive interventions to improve our practice

Individual Approaches

- Working closely with parents/carers to support individual pupils
- Identifying each child's needs and triggers, and putting in place a behaviour support plan where needed (see Section 10 and Appendix 1)
- Making reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, as required by the Equality Act 2010
- Giving pupils time, space and strategies to calm down before their behaviour escalates, including our pastoral support such as ELSA, Draw and Talk and the school counsellor

De-escalation Strategies

When a child's behaviour is escalating, staff will use strategies such as:

- Staying calm, using a quiet, steady voice, relaxed body language and simple, clear language
- Showing empathy and reflecting back how the child may be feeling
- Removing an audience, or moving other children away
- Removing things that may be causing distress, such as noise or other sensory triggers
- Offering limited choices, and giving the child time to process and respond
- Distracting or redirecting the child towards something that interests them or a familiar activity
- Offering the child time in a calm space, such as a Zones of Regulation table or the Eden room
- Calling for help from another adult, including a member of SLT (or MLT if SLT is not available), or a member of staff who knows the child well

Sometimes the need to act is immediate and there is no safe alternative – for example, if a child is about to run into a road. In these situations, staff may need to use reasonable force straight away.

Section 5: When Reasonable Force May Be Used

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force. Staff may use reasonable force to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- Causing injury to themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence
- Damaging property
- Causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a lesson or otherwise

At St Joseph's:

- Reasonable force will only be used as a last resort, when other strategies have not worked or would not be safe, and only for as long as is necessary
- It is illegal to use force as a punishment, and force will never be used in this way
- Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force are trained in safer handling (see Section 15). A member of staff who has not been trained may still need to act in an emergency to keep a child safe; they should call for a trained member of staff immediately
- Staff are not expected to put themselves in danger. Where it is not safe to intervene, staff will keep other children safe, call for help and, if necessary, call the police
- The school will not operate a “no contact” policy, and will not agree to requests from parents/carers or staff that reasonable force will never be used, because this could leave staff unable to keep children safe

Deciding Whether to Use a Restrictive Intervention

Every situation is different. Before and during any restrictive intervention, staff will ask themselves three questions:

- **Is it necessary?** Is there a safer, less restrictive way to manage the situation? Is the intervention likely to reduce the risk, or would it make things worse? Where possible, staff will check with other adults about any wider risks
- **Is it proportionate?** Staff will use the least force, or the least restrictive intervention, for the shortest time needed. If the intervention is escalating the situation, staff will stop and try something else. Staff will take into account the child's age, size, medical conditions, SEND and other needs, and our duties under the Equality Act 2010
- **Have I considered the child's welfare?** Staff will think about the effect on the child, especially if they have experienced trauma, have sensory or communication needs, or other vulnerabilities. Staff will protect the child's dignity – for example, by avoiding an intervention in front of other children where possible – and will keep telling the child calmly what is happening, why, and what they need to do. For children with speech, language and communication needs or English as an additional language, staff will use visual or non-verbal communication and allow time for the

child to respond

Staff who make a reasonable decision to use a restrictive intervention in line with this policy will be supported by the school.

Section 6: Using Safer Handling Techniques

When reasonable force is used, staff will follow their safer handling training and the principles below. The aim is always to keep everyone safe and to re-establish calm and verbal communication as quickly as possible, so that the child can regain self-control.

Staff should:

- Tell the child what they are doing and why, using simple, clear language
- Use the minimum force needed, for the shortest possible time
- Involve another member of staff wherever possible, both for support and as a witness
- Tell the child what they need to do for the hold to be released, repeating this as often as needed
- Hold limbs above a major joint where possible (for example, above the elbow)
- Relax and release holds as soon as the child begins to calm and it is safe to do so
- Hand over to another trained member of staff if they feel they are becoming stressed or losing control

Staff must never:

- Use force as a punishment, or act in anger
- Hold a child in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation – for example, by covering the mouth or nose, or putting pressure on the neck, chest or abdomen
- Deliberately take a child to the ground. If a child ends up on the ground unintentionally, staff will release their holds or move to a safer seated or standing position as quickly as possible
- Twist or force limbs back against a joint, bend fingers, or pull hair or ears
- Touch or hold a child in a way that could be considered indecent
- Deliberately cause pain, or use a technique they have not been trained in (except to prevent serious and immediate harm in an emergency)
- Involve other pupils in a restrictive intervention
- Get drawn into a long verbal exchange or argument with the child during the intervention

Any form of restraint, including seated and standing holds, carries a risk of physical and psychological harm, and will be avoided wherever possible. Where appropriate, a child will receive a medical check and any treatment needed for injuries as soon as possible.

Section 7: Other Physical Contact with Pupils

It is sometimes appropriate and necessary for staff to have physical contact with pupils, and this does not count as the use of reasonable force. Examples include:

- Giving first aid
- Guiding or escorting pupils – for example, holding a child's hand at the front or back of a line, when walking around school or on a school trip, or when helping a child to a calm space they have chosen to use
- Comforting a distressed child
- Praising or congratulating a child, for example with a pat on the back or a high five
- Demonstrating how to use a musical instrument, or demonstrating exercises or techniques in PE
- Providing intimate care, in line with our Intimate Care Policy

When deciding whether physical contact is appropriate, staff will use their professional judgement and take into account our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and staff code of conduct, the circumstances (such as whether other adults are present), the child's age, whether they have SEND or other vulnerabilities, and whether there is an alternative that does not involve physical contact.

Section 8: Seclusion

Seclusion is not a sanction. It will only ever be used at St Joseph's as a safety measure, to protect others from harm, when a child is experiencing very high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation and is not acting with intent. When seclusion is used:

- It will never be carried out through the threat of punishment
- The place the child is kept will be safe, and will not feel threatening or frightening to them
- The child will be supervised by a member of staff at all times
- The child will be allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced
- The incident will be recorded and reported to parents/carers in line with Section 12

The following are not seclusion:

- A child choosing to use a Zones of Regulation table, the Eden room or another calm space, where they are free to leave
- Removal from the classroom as a sanction – for example, being sent to the class next door or to a member of SLT – which is covered by our Relationships and Positive Behaviour Policy

However, if a child is prevented from leaving any room or space – for example, by an adult blocking the doorway or holding the door shut – this is seclusion, and must be recorded and reported.

Section 9: Searching Pupils

The Headteacher, and staff authorised by the Headteacher, may use reasonable force when searching a pupil for items that are prohibited by law (such as knives, weapons, drugs or stolen items). Force must not be used to search for items that are only banned by the school's rules, such as mobile phones or chewing gum. Searches will be carried out in line with our Relationships and Positive Behaviour Policy and the DfE's "Searching, screening and confiscation" advice.

Section 10: Pupils with SEND and Behaviour Support Plans

Some children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) may react to distressing or confusing situations with behaviour that could harm themselves or others. Triggers can include pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar situations, or feelings of fear and anxiety, and children who are non-verbal or find communication difficult may express their needs through their actions. We recognise that this can mean that pupils with SEND are more likely to experience restrictive interventions, and we work hard to prevent this.

Our SENCO, Miss Katherine Maciejewski, and staff who know the child well will:

- Seek to understand the underlying causes and triggers of the child's behaviour, and how the school environment may feel different for them
- Put in place proactive strategies and reasonable adjustments to reduce the likelihood of a restrictive intervention being needed – for example, removing stimuli that cause distress, adapting body language and tone of voice, helping the child to express their emotions before they become overwhelmed, and using calming or familiar activities
- Where appropriate, co-produce a behaviour support plan with the child, their parents/carers and any other professionals involved (see Appendix 1)

A behaviour support plan will set out:

- The child's triggers and early warning signs
- Proactive strategies and adjustments, including how the child can communicate their needs
- De-escalation strategies that work for the child
- Any circumstances where increased physical contact may be appropriate, and clear limits around its use, agreed with parents/carers and relevant professionals
- How the child will be supported after an incident

Where there is an identified risk that reasonable force or another restrictive intervention may be needed, the school will carry out a risk assessment and put measures in place to reduce the risk, such as training and prevention strategies. Behaviour support plans and risk assessments will be reviewed with the child and their

parents/carers regularly, and after any significant incident. Whether a restrictive intervention is appropriate will always depend on the circumstances at the time, even where it has been considered in a behaviour support plan.

Section 11: Support After an Incident

- **Immediately after the incident:** the child and any staff involved will be checked for injuries and receive first aid or medical treatment if needed. Injuries will be recorded in line with our health and safety procedures and, where required, reported to the Health and Safety Executive
- **Informing leaders:** a member of SLT (or MLT if SLT is not available) will be told as soon as possible after the incident
- **Follow-up conversations:** once everyone is calm, the school will hold follow-up conversations with the child and with the staff involved, separately, to understand what happened and why, and to repair and rebuild relationships. Where possible, these will be led by a member of staff who was not involved in the incident, and a second adult may be present to support the child
- **Wellbeing:** the school will continue to check on the wellbeing of the child and staff, and offer further support if needed – for example, further conversations, ELSA support, the school counsellor, or our employee assistance programme for staff
- **Witnesses:** any child who saw the incident and was upset by it will also be offered support
- **Learning:** SLT will review every incident as soon as possible, to understand why the intervention was needed, its impact, and how it might be avoided in future – for example, by introducing or changing a behaviour support plan

Staff involved in an incident may seek advice from a senior colleague and/or their trade union representative before completing their record, but this should not delay the record being made on the same day.

Section 12: Recording and Reporting

It is a legal requirement for the school to record every significant incident involving the use of force, and every incident of seclusion or restraint, and to report it to the child's parents/carers. These requirements apply even where the use of a restrictive intervention has been agreed with parents/carers as part of a behaviour support plan.

Recording

- The member(s) of staff involved will record the incident on CPOMS as soon as practicable, and no later than the end of the same day
- Any handwritten notes will be scanned and uploaded to CPOMS
- The Headteacher will make sure that the record is complete

The record will include, as a minimum:

- The names of the child and the staff directly involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the child, including whether they have SEND and their SEN status (SEN support or EHC plan)
- The time, date and location of the incident, and roughly how long the intervention lasted
- A brief account of the incident, including what led up to it, any known or possible triggers, and the prevention and de-escalation strategies used
- What type of intervention was used and, where force was used, the type and degree of force
- Why the intervention was judged to be necessary
- Details of any injuries, and any support given afterwards, including any medical treatment

Where possible, staff will also record the child's and any witnesses' accounts, when and how parents/carers were told, and what follow-up has taken place.

Reporting to Parents and Carers

A member of SLT (or MLT if SLT is not available) will inform the child's parents/carers as soon as practicable, and wherever possible on the same day. Parents/carers will also be informed in writing, for example by email

or through the school's messaging system. The report will include, as a minimum:

- The time, date and location of the incident, and roughly how long the intervention lasted
- Why the intervention was judged to be necessary
- What type of intervention was used and, where force was used, the type and degree of force
- Details of any injuries

Parents/carers will be invited to a follow-up discussion where appropriate. This may cover any triggers or warning signs, whether the behaviour support plan was followed, which de-escalation strategies were used and how well they worked, and what might be done differently in future.

The only exception to informing parents/carers is where it appears that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the child. In this case, the DSL will be consulted, and the incident must instead be reported to any parent/carer to whom it can be reported without causing harm or, if there is no such person, to the local authority where the child lives. Where a child is looked after, the report will also be made to the local authority responsible for them.

Section 13: Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Board

- Makes sure the school has a procedure for recording and reporting the use of force, seclusion and restraint, and takes all reasonable steps to make sure it is followed
- Regularly reviews and challenges data on restrictive interventions (see Section 14)
- Approves this policy

The Headteacher

- Makes sure this policy is followed and that staff are trained
- Makes sure every incident is recorded and reported, and reviewed to learn lessons
- Makes sure risk assessments are in place for pupils, and for staff who regularly work with pupils where restrictive interventions may be needed
- Reports data on restrictive interventions to the governing board

The DSL and SENCO

- The DSL (Ms Judith Harvey), or a deputy DSL, will be informed of any incident that raises a safeguarding concern, and will be consulted where there are concerns about informing parents/carers
- The SENCO (Miss Katherine Maciejewski) will lead on behaviour support plans and reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND, working with class teachers and parents/carers

All Staff

- Know and follow this policy, and use prevention and de-escalation first
- Use restrictive interventions only when necessary, proportionate and in line with their training
- Record every significant incident on CPOMS on the same day, and tell SLT (or MLT) straight away
- Report any concerns about the way a restrictive intervention has been used, in line with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and whistleblowing procedures

Section 14: Monitoring and Use of Data

The Headteacher will review data on restrictive interventions at least half-termly and report it to the governing board at least termly. Governors will review and challenge this data to make sure that the school:

- Identifies and makes improvements to policies and practice, particularly where approaches are not working
- Identifies training and development needs for staff
- Understands patterns and triggers for individual children, and uses this to put in place or revise behaviour support plans, working with parents/carers

- Identifies any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions for pupils with SEND, pupils with protected characteristics or other vulnerable pupils

Because the number of incidents in a primary school is usually small, governors will take care not to over-interpret small numbers, while making sure that every incident is understood.

Section 15: Training

- All staff will be trained in this policy, and in de-escalation, as part of their induction and at least annually
- Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions will receive safer handling training from an accredited provider, and refresher training in line with the provider's recommendations
- The school office will keep an up-to-date record of staff who have completed safer handling training, and when their refresher training is due (see Appendix 2)
- Training will reflect the principles of the DfE guidance, including prevention, de-escalation, safe techniques, and recording and reporting

Section 16: Complaints and Allegations

Any complaint about the use of a restrictive intervention will be dealt with under the school's complaints procedure. If an allegation is made that a member of staff has used force or another restrictive intervention inappropriately, it will be dealt with in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education and Appendix 3 of our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. A member of staff will not automatically be suspended because an allegation has been made; any decision about suspension will follow that guidance.

Section 17: Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher and approved by the governing board. It is published on the school website and made available to all staff, pupils and parents/carers.

Appendix 1: Behaviour Support Plan Template

To be co-produced with the child, their parents/carers, the SENCO and relevant staff and professionals.
Reviewed regularly and after any significant incident.

Section	Details
Child's name and class	
Date of plan and review date	
SEND information (SEN support / EHC plan) and relevant needs	
What the child is good at, and what helps them feel safe	
Known triggers	
Early warning signs (what we may see or hear)	
Proactive strategies and reasonable adjustments (including how the child communicates their needs)	
De-escalation strategies that work for this child (including calm spaces, e.g. Zones of Regulation table or Eden room)	
If behaviour becomes unsafe: agreed response, and any circumstances where increased physical contact or safer handling holds may be used (with limits)	
Support after an incident (for the child and others)	
Staff who know the child well / key adults	
Agreed by (child, parent/carer, SENCO, class teacher) – names and date	

Remember: every significant use of force, seclusion or restraint must still be recorded on CPOMS and reported to parents/carers, even when it is part of this plan.

Appendix 2: Record of Staff Trained in Safer Handling

To be kept up to date by the school office. Staff should complete refresher training in line with the training provider's recommendations.

Staff name	Role	Date of training	Refresher due
Miss Suzanne Long	Headteacher	[insert date]	[insert date]
Hayley Openshaw	Teaching assistant	October 2022	[insert date]
Adanna Ebuzoeme	Teaching assistant	October 2022	[insert date]
Tammy Clark	Teaching assistant	October 2022	[insert date]
Mr TJ	Teaching assistant	[insert date]	[insert date]

Appendix 3: Checklist After a Restrictive Intervention

✓	Action
	Check the child and staff for injuries; give first aid or medical treatment if needed
	Make sure the child and others are safe and supported
	Tell a member of SLT (or MLT if SLT is not available) straight away
	Tell the DSL if there is a safeguarding concern
	Record the incident on CPOMS by the end of the day, including all the minimum details in Section 12
	SLT/MLT informs parents/carers the same day, and in writing, with the minimum details in Section 12
	Record and report any injuries in line with health and safety procedures
	Hold follow-up conversations with the child and staff (ideally led by someone not involved)
	Offer support to any children who witnessed the incident
	Invite parents/carers to a follow-up discussion where appropriate
	Review or create a behaviour support plan and risk assessment
	SLT reviews the incident to learn lessons