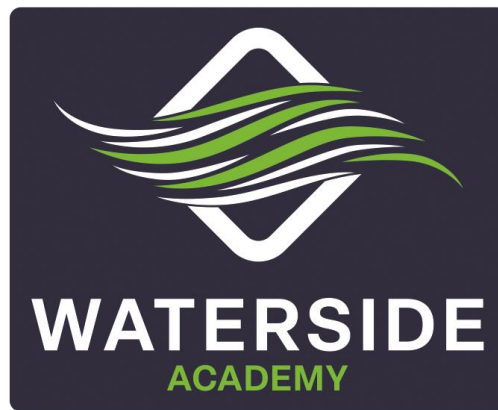




CARE AND CONTROL POLICY

Incorporating Reasonable Force and Restrictive Interventions

Academic year	2026-27
Approved by Governors	September 2026
Policy review date	September 2027
Policy lead	Deputy Headteacher / Behaviour Lead
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Lauren Shields
Headteacher	Jason Webb

Policy status

This policy has been updated for 2026-27 to reflect the Department for Education's Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools guidance, effective from 1 April 2026, and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

Contents

1. Policy statement and principles
 2. Legal and statutory framework
 3. Scope and related policies
 4. Definitions
 5. Roles and responsibilities
 6. Prevention and de-escalation
 7. When reasonable force may be used
 8. Unacceptable uses of force
 9. Other appropriate physical contact
 10. Restrictive interventions and seclusion
 11. SEND, disability and individual planning
 12. Positive handling / Team Teach
 13. Absconding and leaving the school site
 14. Searching pupils
 15. Recording and reporting duties
 16. Informing parents and carers
 17. Post-incident support, reflection and repair
 18. Injuries, first aid and health and safety
 19. Complaints, allegations and safeguarding
 20. Monitoring, governance and data analysis
 21. Staff training and support
 22. Policy review
- Appendix A - Waterside decision-making framework
- Appendix B - Minimum recording requirements
- Appendix C - Post-incident review checklist
- Appendix D - Key legal and guidance references

1. Policy statement and principles

Waterside Academy is committed to providing a calm, safe, supportive and inclusive environment in which pupils and staff are protected from harm. Positive relationships, predictable routines, trauma-informed practice, prevention and de-escalation are central to our approach.

The use of reasonable force or another restrictive intervention is not a behaviour-management strategy of first choice. It will only be considered where it is lawful, necessary and proportionate in the individual circumstances. Staff should use the least restrictive intervention and the least amount of force necessary for the shortest amount of time.

- The welfare and best interests of the child remain central to decision-making.
- Force must never be used as a punishment.
- Staff should seek to prevent escalation and reduce the need for restrictive interventions.
- Pupils must be treated with dignity and respect before, during and after any intervention.
- The school will make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and pupils with SEND.
- Every significant incident of force, and every incident of seclusion or restraint covered by the statutory requirements, will be recorded and reported in accordance with this policy.

Waterside approach

The school does not operate a 'no contact' policy. Appropriate physical contact may be necessary to care for, guide or protect pupils. Equally, physical intervention must never be routine, punitive, degrading or used merely to secure compliance where there is no lawful justification.

2. Legal and statutory framework

This policy has regard to the following legislation and current national guidance:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, including sections 93 and 93A.
- Education Act 1996, including the statutory powers relating to searches for prohibited items.
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025.
- Department for Education: Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools (effective 1 April 2026).
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments and the Public Sector Equality Duty where applicable.
- Human Rights Act 1998.
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations.
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004.
- DfE Behaviour in Schools guidance and Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance.

The 2013 DfE 'Use of reasonable force in schools' guidance has been replaced by the 2026 restrictive interventions guidance. This policy therefore supersedes the references to the 2013 guidance contained in Waterside's previous 2024-25 policy.

3. Scope and related policies

This policy applies to all school staff and should be understood by governors, volunteers, contractors and other adults working with pupils. It applies on the school site and, where staff have lawful charge of pupils, during school-organised activities and visits.

It should be read alongside the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, SEND Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Searching and Confiscation procedures, Staff Code of Conduct, Complaints Policy, Educational Visits procedures and relevant individual risk assessments / behaviour support plans.

4. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Restrictive intervention	An umbrella term for physical and non-physical actions that prevent, restrict or subdue movement of a pupil's body or part of their body.
Reasonable force	Physical force used lawfully in limited circumstances. 'Reasonable' means no more force than is necessary, for the least amount of time, taking account of the circumstances.
Significant incident of force	An incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate everyday physical contact. Significant incidents are subject to statutory recording and reporting requirements.
Restraint	A non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. It may involve direct physical contact or, in some circumstances, no direct physical contact.
Seclusion	A non-disciplinary intervention where a pupil is confined away from others and prevented from leaving by physical obstruction, blocking, or by being made to believe they will be punished if they leave.
Appropriate physical contact	Ordinary contact that is proper and necessary in context, such as first aid, appropriate guidance or escort, reassurance, or demonstrating a technique in PE.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 Governing Body

- Ensure that lawful and effective procedures are in place for restrictive interventions, including statutory recording and reporting.
- Take reasonable steps to ensure the procedures are followed.
- Regularly review data to identify patterns, repeated incidents, training needs, ineffective approaches and any disproportionate use affecting pupils with SEND, protected characteristics or other vulnerabilities.
- Ensure the policy is accessible to staff, pupils and parents.

5.2 Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team

- Promote prevention, de-escalation and a culture in which restrictive interventions are minimised.

- Ensure staff understand the legal framework and Waterside procedures.
- Ensure appropriate training, risk assessment, support and oversight.
- Review serious or repeated incidents and ensure individual plans are updated where necessary.
- Ensure safeguarding concerns or allegations are managed under KCSIE 2026.

5.3 Staff

- Use professional judgement and act within the law and this policy.
- Use prevention and de-escalation wherever possible.
- Consider necessity, proportionality, pupil welfare, dignity, SEND, medical needs, communication needs and known trauma or vulnerabilities.
- Seek assistance where practicable.
- Record incidents promptly and participate in post-incident review.

6. Prevention and de-escalation

Waterside's first response is prevention. Staff should understand behaviour as communication and use knowledge of the pupil, environment and likely triggers to reduce risk before crisis develops.

- calm, clear communication and one calm voice;
- appropriate tone, body language and positioning;
- acknowledging the pupil's concern without unnecessary confrontation;
- offering choices, take-up time and a dignified route out of conflict;
- reducing demands or environmental stimuli where appropriate;
- redirecting or distracting using known interests or regulation strategies;
- allowing time and space to regulate where this can be done safely;
- using the Waterside Help Protocol and seeking additional staff support;
- following individual behaviour support plans, risk assessments and agreed reasonable adjustments.

Where a pupil is becoming dysregulated, staff should consider whether continued adult proximity, verbal interaction or the environment itself is increasing risk and adjust their approach accordingly.

7. When reasonable force may be used

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances. It may be used 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 teaching session or otherwise.

The decision is based on the circumstances at the time. Staff should consider:

- Is intervention necessary, or is there a safer and less restrictive alternative?
- Is the intervention likely to reduce the risk rather than escalate it?
- Is the response proportionate to the seriousness and likelihood of harm?
- Can the least amount of force be used for the shortest time?
- What are the pupil's age, size, medical needs, SEND, communication needs, vulnerabilities and known history?
- What impact may the intervention have on the pupil's welfare and dignity?

8. Unacceptable uses of force

Force must never be used as punishment

It is unlawful to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment.

- Staff must not use restraint in a way that affects a pupil's airway, breathing or circulation.
- Staff must not cover the mouth or nose or apply pressure to the neck region or abdomen.
- Ground restraint carries particular risk and should be avoided. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release or reposition to a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.
- Restrictive intervention must not be used merely because a pupil refuses an instruction, unless the circumstances meet a lawful threshold for intervention.
- Intervention must not be degrading, retaliatory, punitive or used to cause pain.

9. Other appropriate physical contact

Physical contact with pupils is not in itself unlawful. Appropriate contact may include:

- giving first aid or responding to a medical need;
- guiding or escorting a pupil where this is appropriate and consensual / low-level;
- comforting or reassuring a distressed pupil where appropriate to the pupil and context;
- congratulating or praising a pupil in an appropriate manner;
- demonstrating exercises, techniques or equipment use during PE, sport or practical learning;
- protective action required under the school's duty of care.

Staff should remain sensitive to individual preferences, safeguarding considerations, cultural factors, SEND and any known history of trauma.

10. Restrictive interventions and seclusion

Seclusion is distinct from ordinary removal from a classroom, voluntary time-out or a pupil choosing to regulate in a quieter space.

Under the 2026 DfE guidance, seclusion should only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. It is not a disciplinary sanction and must not be implemented through threat of punishment.

- The space used must be safe and should not feel threatening or intimidating.
- The pupil must be supervised throughout.
- The pupil must be allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced.
- Every incident of seclusion must be recorded and reported under the statutory procedures.
- Waterside will seek to avoid seclusion through prevention, staffing, de-escalation, environmental adjustment and individual planning.

Important 2026 change

The previous policy wording stating that seclusion was generally 'not permitted' with an emergency exception is no longer an accurate description of the current national framework. The 2026 policy uses the DfE definition and the statutory recording/reporting requirements effective from April 2026.

11. SEND, disability and individual planning

Waterside recognises that pupils with SEND may be disproportionately subject to restrictive interventions if underlying needs and triggers are not understood. Distress may arise from pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar environments, anxiety, communication difficulties or other unmet needs.

- Staff should identify triggers and proactive strategies with pupils, parents and relevant professionals.
- Reasonable adjustments must be considered under the Equality Act 2010.
- Where appropriate, behaviour support / positive handling plans should be co-produced and should describe prevention, communication and de-escalation strategies.
- Where an increased likelihood of restrictive intervention is identified, an individual risk assessment must be in place.
- Plans should specify any circumstances in which increased physical contact may be appropriate and the parameters around its use.
- Plans must be reviewed periodically and following a significant incident.

12. Positive handling / Team Teach

Waterside uses Team Teach principles to support safe practice, with a strong emphasis on prevention, de-escalation, risk reduction and the least restrictive response. Training does not create a separate legal power to use force; any intervention must still be lawful, necessary and proportionate in the circumstances.

Staff likely to need to use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions should be adequately trained in safe and lawful practice and preventative strategies. The school will maintain appropriate records of training and refreshers.

The Waterside Help Protocol remains a practical staff-support strategy. Where possible, staff should seek assistance and accept support so that risk can be reduced and the pupil can be supported by the most appropriate adult.

13. Absconding and leaving the school site

A pupil attempting to leave a classroom or the school site does not, by itself, justify the use of force. Staff must assess the actual risk.

Physical intervention may only be considered where the circumstances provide a lawful justification, for example where allowing the pupil to leave would create a serious and immediate risk of injury or other circumstances falling within the statutory power. Staff should consider the pupil's age, understanding, vulnerability, location, traffic or community risks, and whether safer alternatives are available.

Where physical intervention is not justified, staff should follow Waterside's missing / absconding procedures, maintain observation where safe, alert senior staff and parents/carers as appropriate, and involve the police where the risk warrants this.

14. Searching pupils

The Headteacher and authorised staff have statutory powers to search pupils and possessions in specified circumstances. Reasonable force may be used where lawful to search for legally prohibited items, but not simply to search for an item banned only under school rules.

Any search must follow the current DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance and Waterside's safeguarding procedures. Staff should consider the pupil's dignity, SEND, communication needs and any safeguarding concerns.

15. Recording and reporting duties

Statutory requirement from April 2026

The Governing Body must ensure procedures are in place to record every significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil. Incidents should be recorded as soon as practicable, with staff endeavouring to complete the record no later than the same day.

Waterside will record significant use of force, seclusion and restraint on the school's agreed physical intervention record and safeguarding / behaviour recording system. Records should include, as a minimum:

- names of the pupil and staff directly involved;
- the pupil's relevant needs or circumstances, including identified SEND and SEN status where applicable;
- time, date, location and approximate duration;
- what led to the incident, known or potential triggers, and preventative / de-escalation strategies used;
- the type and degree of force or restrictive intervention used, where relevant;
- why the intervention was assessed as necessary and proportionate;
- any physical injury or other adverse impact;
- post-incident support and any medical treatment;
- when and how parents/carers were informed;
- pupil, staff and witness accounts where appropriate, and follow-up actions.

The recording duty applies even where restrictive intervention has been anticipated or discussed with parents within an individual plan.

16. Informing parents and carers

Each significant use of force must be reported to the pupil's parent(s) as soon as practicable after the incident; Waterside will endeavour to do so on the same day. Communication should normally be confirmed in writing.

For seclusion and restraint incidents, the statutory requirements similarly require written recording and information to parents as soon as practicable, with the school endeavouring to do this no later than the same day.

The report should include the time, date, location and approximate duration; why the intervention was necessary; the type/degree of force where relevant; and any physical injuries. Parents should be offered a follow-up discussion where appropriate.

Where informing a parent would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil, the school will follow the statutory exception and safeguarding procedures, including reporting to another parent where safe or to the relevant local authority where required.

17. Post-incident support, reflection and repair

Every restrictive intervention should be treated as an opportunity to learn and reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

- Check the immediate physical and emotional wellbeing of the pupil and staff.
- Provide medical assessment / first aid where appropriate.
- Allow recovery time before reflective discussion.
- Obtain separate pupil and staff reflections, using communication methods appropriate to the pupil.
- Where possible, facilitate a follow-up conversation by a staff member not directly involved in the incident.
- Use restorative practice to repair and rebuild relationships.
- Review triggers, environmental factors, staffing, de-escalation and whether the individual plan was followed.
- Update risk assessments and behaviour / positive handling plans where required.

- Consider support for pupils who witnessed a distressing incident.

18. Injuries, first aid and health and safety

Any injury or suspected injury will be assessed promptly. First aid or medical treatment will be provided as appropriate and injuries will be recorded under the school's health and safety procedures. Incidents will be reported to the Health and Safety Executive where the relevant reporting threshold is met.

The school will also consider the psychological impact of an incident on pupils and staff and provide additional wellbeing support where required.

19. Complaints, allegations and safeguarding

Complaints about restrictive interventions will be managed under the school's Complaints Policy. Where a concern or allegation suggests that a member of staff may have behaved in a way that harmed a child, may have harmed a child, may pose a risk of harm, or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children, the school will follow Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and its Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The school will distinguish between a complaint about an appropriate use of force, a low-level concern and an allegation that meets the harm threshold. Staff involved will be treated fairly and offered appropriate support.

20. Monitoring, governance and data analysis

The Deputy Headteacher / Behaviour Lead will maintain oversight of restrictive intervention records and report themes and trends to the Headteacher and Governing Body.

Monitoring will consider:

- frequency, type and duration of interventions;
- repeat incidents and known triggers;
- whether preventative and de-escalation strategies are effective;
- injuries or adverse impacts;
- staff training and support needs;
- whether individual plans and risk assessments require revision;
- any disproportionate use involving pupils with SEND, protected characteristics or other vulnerabilities;
- whether practice is reducing over time and whether restrictive interventions are being used only when necessary.

21. Staff training and support

Staff will receive training appropriate to their role and the needs of Waterside's cohort. Training will include the legal framework, safeguarding, prevention, de-escalation, communication, dynamic risk assessment, SEND and reasonable adjustments, safe intervention principles, recording/reporting and post-incident support.

Formal physical intervention training will be refreshed in line with the training provider's requirements and school risk assessment. Staff should not use techniques for which they have not been trained, except where an unforeseen emergency requires lawful action to prevent immediate harm and the response is reasonable in the circumstances.

22. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, local procedures, safeguarding learning or Waterside practice changes. The Governing Body will approve the policy and monitor its implementation.

Appendix A - Waterside decision-making framework

1. **PREVENT** - use relationships, routines, reasonable adjustments and environmental planning.
2. **DE-ESCALATE** - use calm communication, time, space, choices, regulation strategies and the Help Protocol.
3. **ASSESS RISK** - identify the immediate risk, who may be harmed, and whether a less restrictive option is available.
4. **DECIDE** - if intervention is necessary, use the least restrictive option / least force for the shortest time.
5. **SAFEGUARD** - protect breathing, circulation, dignity and welfare; seek help and medical support where required.
6. **RELEASE / REDUCE** - reduce or stop the intervention as soon as the immediate risk decreases.
7. **RECORD & REPORT** - complete the required written record promptly and inform parents in line with statutory requirements.
8. **REVIEW & REPAIR** - debrief, support, restore relationships and amend plans to reduce recurrence.

Appendix B - Minimum recording requirements

Record	Required information
People	Pupil and staff directly involved; witnesses where relevant.
Context	Date, time, location, duration; relevant SEND/medical/communication needs.
Antecedents	What happened beforehand; known/potential triggers; preventative and de-escalation strategies.
Intervention	Type of intervention/force, degree of force, why it was necessary and proportionate.
Impact	Injury, distress, medical treatment, first aid or other adverse impact.
Voice	Pupil and staff accounts when they are able to reflect.
Parent reporting	When, how and by whom parent/carers was informed; written information supplied.
Follow-up	Restorative work, plan/risk assessment changes, referrals, safeguarding action, staff/pupil support.

Appendix C - Post-incident review checklist

- Was the intervention lawful, necessary and proportionate?
- Were less restrictive options attempted or considered?
- Were the pupil's SEND, medical needs, communication, trauma and vulnerabilities considered?
- Was dignity maintained and was the intervention reduced/stopped at the earliest safe point?
- Were any injuries or wellbeing concerns addressed?

- Was the incident recorded within the required timeframe?
- Were parents/carers informed in writing as soon as practicable?
- Does the behaviour support / positive handling plan need updating?
- Does the risk assessment need updating?
- Is further safeguarding, SEND, health or multi-agency support required?
- What can Waterside change to reduce the likelihood of recurrence?

Appendix D - Key legal and guidance references

- Department for Education (2025/26), Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools - effective 1 April 2026.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- Education and Inspections Act 2006, sections 93 and 93A.
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025.
- Education Act 1996 - searching powers.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Human Rights Act 1998.
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- DfE Behaviour in Schools guidance.
- DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance.