



Denefield School

Restrictive Interventions and Reasonable Force Policy

Approved on	22 April 2026
Date of next review	April 2029
Review cycle	Triennial
Type of policy	Non statutory
Policy owner	Headteacher
Location of policy	Website



Restrictive interventions and reasonable force policy

Status: Non-statutory

1. Purpose and aims

School staff have a legal power to use reasonable force as set out in the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Reasonable force may also be used where appropriate to search a student where a member of staff has reasonable grounds to suspect the possession of a prohibited item.

The safety and well-being of all students and staff at Denefield is of paramount importance in enabling the school to establish and maintain a well ordered, supportive environment which is conducive to teaching and learning.

This policy sets out when and how staff may use restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, to keep students and staff safe; and how Denefield minimises the need for such interventions through prevention and de-escalation.

This policy aims to provide clear guidance for staff, trustees, students and parents, so that they can understand what is meant by restrictive interventions, reasonable force and the extreme circumstances in which the use of physical intervention or seclusion may be necessary.

2. Legal framework

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, sections 93 and 93A (power to use reasonable force; duty to record and report significant incidents)
- The Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974; Human Rights Act 1998; Equality Act 2010
- DfE: Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026).
- DfE: Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools (July 2022)

3. Definitions (DfE April 2026)

Restrictive intervention: any means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body (or part thereof), whether physical or non-physical.

Reasonable force: a legal term that includes physical restrictive interventions. It means no more force than necessary for the shortest time required, depending on the circumstances.

Significant incident: any incident where use of force goes beyond appropriate everyday physical contact.

Seclusion: a non-disciplinary safety measure involving keeping a student confined to a place away from others and preventing them from leaving (by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave). Seclusion must be recorded and reported.

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

4. Using restrictive intervention or reasonable force to physically restrain a student

Any member of school staff may use reasonable force to prevent a student from: (i) causing injury to themselves or others; (ii) committing a criminal offence; (iii) damaging property; or (iv) causing disorder. Staff may also use reasonable force when searching for legally prohibited items under statutory powers (not for items banned solely by school rules). Decisions must consider the student's welfare, age/size, SEND/vulnerabilities, context, and whether force is likely to reduce or escalate risk.

5. Other appropriate physical contact

Denefield does not operate a "no contact" policy. Appropriate physical contact (not amounting to force) can include first aid, guiding or escorting (e.g., hand-over-hand, hand on upper arm), comforting a distressed student, or demonstrating movement in subjects like PE and drama, subject to staff judgement and safeguarding.

6. The principles of restrictive intervention are

- Safety first, dignity always: interventions must protect life and safety while respecting the pupil's dignity.
- Prevent and de-escalate: prioritise early help, de-escalation and environmental/classroom strategies to minimise restrictive interventions.
- Necessity & proportionality: use the least restrictive intervention that is necessary and proportionate, for the shortest time.
- No "no-contact" blanket policy: staff are supported to make appropriate, lawful physical contact where reasonable.

7. Preventing the need for restrictive interventions

We minimise use through:

- Consistent whole-school routines and calm environments, including corridors and social spaces.
- Evidence-informed classroom management and relational practice.
- Staff training in communication tone, empathy, de-escalation and emotion coaching.
- Data monitoring of incidents to target support and improvement.

8. Students with SEND and other vulnerabilities

Some students (e.g., with pain, sensory overload, trauma or communication difficulties) may be disproportionately affected by restrictive interventions. We will make reasonable adjustments and develop behaviour support plans; understand triggers and co-design strategies with parents and professionals; and review plans after incidents to reduce recurrence.

9. Searching, screening and confiscation

Headteachers and authorised staff may search students/possessions for legally prohibited items under law and may use reasonable force for such searches (not for items banned only by school rules). Staff will follow DfE's Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools guidance and Denefield's Search and Confiscation policy.

10. Roles and responsibilities of the Headteacher, other staff, and Trustees

Headteacher: ensures policy implementation, staff awareness, training, monitoring and reports to Trustees.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): ensures recording, parent notification, post-incident reflection and external referrals where appropriate; quality-assures incident data.

SENDCO & Heads of Year/House: coordinates risk assessments, behaviour support plans and reasonable adjustments; updates staff guidance

All staff: prioritise prevention and de-escalation; use necessary and proportionate force only; report and record incidents same day where practicable.

Trust Board: monitors incident data/trends and assures compliance with statutory duties and this policy.

11. Recording and reporting

Denefield will record and report: (i) every significant incident involving the use of force; and (ii) every use of seclusion.

Recording: Staff will complete an incident record on CPOMS on the same day where practicable, and no later than 24 hours after the incident. Records will include: context; risk; alternatives attempted; necessity/proportionality rationale; who was involved; duration; any injury and medical attention; pupil voice; and follow-up actions.

Parent/carer reporting: We will notify parents/carers as soon as reasonably possible by phone and follow up in writing with a summary of the incident and next steps.

Data use: The Headteacher/DSL will review records, identify patterns, and report termly to Trustees. Data is used to reduce incidents, target training, and improve environmental/behavioural supports.

Post-incident support and review: we will support pupils and staff after incidents, capture student voice, and complete a structured debrief to learn and adjust support plans. Where appropriate, we will involve parents and relevant professionals.

12. Complaints and allegations

Complaints follow the school's Complaints Policy. Allegations about staff conduct are managed under safeguarding and disciplinary procedures as appropriate.

Relationship to other policies

- Anti-bullying policy
- Behaviour and discipline policy
- Code of conduct for parents/carers and visitors
- Code of conduct for staff
- Complaints policies
- Drugs policy
- Equality policy
- Safeguarding and child protection policy
- Search and confiscation policy
- Special educational needs policy

Who/what was consulted

[Use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions guidance](#) (DfE, April 2026)

[Searching, Screening and Confiscation](#) (DfE, July 2022)

Headteacher

SENDCO

Designated Safeguarding Lead

West Berkshire guidance: *West Berkshire Council Use of Restrictive Interventions / Positive Handling Guidance*, September 2023

APPENDIX 1: Unacceptable and Dangerous Interventions

Force must never be used as punishment. Do not use techniques that compromise airway, breathing or circulation (e.g., pressure on neck or abdomen, covering mouth/nose). Avoid ground restraint—if a pupil ends up on the ground unintentionally, release/re-position to a safer alternative as quickly as possible. Where restraint has occurred, consider medical assessment promptly and record any injury.

Denefield also prohibits: prone/supine restraint; joint locks; pain-compliance; seated double embrace; double basket-hold; nose distraction; or any technique risking airway obstruction.

APPENDIX 2: Seclusion (safety measure only)

Seclusion may be used only to contain immediate risk of harm when a student is highly dysregulated; it is not a disciplinary response, nor may it be threatened as a sanction. The space must be safe and non-threatening; the pupil must be supervised at all times and allowed to leave as soon as risk reduces. Every use of seclusion must be recorded and reported.

There is an important distinction to be made between a child being actively 'secluded' by staff and a child personally choosing to 'retreat' to a safe place to regulate. Having the latter option of a safe room to retreat to is important for many students and can be very important. However, the key distinction here is that they are free to choose when to access the room, and when to leave. If they are not free to choose when they access the room or when they leave (whether because, for example, they are taken there, the door is barred, or an adult 'guards' the door) then the child's liberty is being restricted and this is seclusion.

The sole reason for seclusion is to contain behaviour that is likely to cause harm to the student or others. This might be, for example, because the student is highly aroused, agitated, overactive, and/or aggressive, is making serious threats or gestures towards others, and/or is being seriously destructive to their surroundings. In this instance, other interventions will have failed to contain the behaviour and there is no alternative.

If, in these exceptional situations, there is a period of seclusion for a student, the school must also ensure their health and safety, safeguarding, and welfare requirements. Staff must remain available to the student throughout. Staff must be able to observe the student at all times. This includes access to the toilet, food and drink, and activities.

APPENDIX 3: Recording the use of restrictive intervention / seclusion



Record of restrictive intervention / seclusion

Completed by the investigating officer

Date of incident:	
Approximate time and duration of incident:	
Name of student involved:	
Name of member of staff involved:	
Name of staff conducting debrief:	
Confirmation that the parent / carer has been contacted by phone as soon as practical:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> By: Date:
Confirmation that the parent / carer has been informed in written form as soon as possible:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> By: Date:
Confirmation that an investigation has taken place:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / ongoing <input type="checkbox"/>
Confirmation that the incident has been logged on CPOMS under "Restrictive intervention required"	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Was seclusion used?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Was restraint used?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
List relevant needs or circumstances of the student including SEND code, if applicable:	
Was medical attention required for any party?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Summary of the incident: checklist for communicating with parents / carers

Information	Notes from conversation
<input type="checkbox"/> Time, date, location, duration	
<input type="checkbox"/> Why the intervention was deemed necessary	
<input type="checkbox"/> Type of intervention, degree of force	
<input type="checkbox"/> Details of any injuries	

Signed (investigating officer):	Date:
Signed (headteacher):	Date:

Prompts for incident debrief (may be completed at a later date)

Student view

What do you remember feeling just before, during, and after the intervention?	
Looking back, were there any early signs that things were becoming difficult for you, and what might help next time before it reaches that point?	
What support from staff or others helps you feel safe and calm after a difficult incident, and is there anything you would want done differently in the future?	

Staff view

What factors may have contributed to the escalation, and were there any early opportunities for de-escalation?	
How did you feel during and after the restrictive intervention, and what support do you need now?	
What follow-up actions are needed for the student, the staff involved, and the wider team to restore relationships and prevent recurrence?	