Elm Court School
Every Learner Matters

Livity School
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Restrictive Interventions and the Use of Reasonable Force Policy

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1. Policy Statement

The Elm Court Livity Federation is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment where the welfare, dignity and rights of all pupils and staff are protected. The school recognises that, in exceptional circumstances, restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, may be necessary to prevent harm and maintain safety.

This policy sets out the school's approach to restrictive interventions and the use of reasonable force, ensuring compliance with relevant legislation, Department for Education (DfE) guidance, safeguarding requirements, and best practice principles.

The school aims to:

- Minimise the need for restrictive interventions through proactive behaviour support
- Promote positive relationships and de-escalation strategies
- Protect pupils and staff from harm
- Ensure any use of force is lawful, proportionate, necessary and reasonable
- Maintain clear accountability, recording and monitoring arrangements

2. Context

Schools have a duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children while maintaining a safe environment for learning.

Restrictive interventions are measures that restrict a pupil's movement, liberty or freedom to act independently. These interventions should only be used when necessary and as a last resort after appropriate preventative and de-escalation strategies have been attempted, unless there is an immediate risk of harm.

This policy reflects:

- Education Act 1996 (Section 550A and related provisions)
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current version)
- SEND Code of Practice
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- DfE Guidance: Restrictive Interventions and the Use of Reasonable Force in Schools (April 2026)

The school acknowledges that restrictive interventions may have a significant impact on pupils and staff and must therefore be carefully managed and monitored.

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Behaviour policy
- Child protection and safeguarding policy

- Complaints policy
- Health and safety policy

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All pupils attending the school
- All school employees
- Agency staff
- Volunteers

The policy applies:

- On school premises
- During educational visits
- During transport arranged by the school
- During activities under the school's lawful control

All school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force where necessary.

The Headteacher may additionally identify staff who receive enhanced training in restrictive intervention techniques.

4. Definitions

Any intervention that restricts a pupil's movement, liberty or freedom to act independently.

Restrictive interventions

Restrictive interventions are used to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body or part of the body. This policy uses ‘restrictive interventions’ as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways.

Examples include:

- Physical restraint
- Physical guidance
- Escorting a pupil
- Blocking movement
- Restricting a pupil from leaving an area
- Environmental restrictions

Reasonable Force

Reasonable force refers to the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to restrain children, using no more force than is needed for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

Reasonable force may include:

- Physical guidance
- Holding
- Restraining a pupil where necessary

Reasonable force does not automatically mean restraint and should always be the minimum intervention required.

Physical Restraint

Holding a pupil to restrict movement against their will in order to prevent harm or serious disruption.

Restraint is a form of non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact.

Examples could include:

- A staff member holding a pupil's hands down when the pupil is attempting to harm themselves or others.

Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention that keeps a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevents them from leaving, for the safety of that pupil and/or others. Seclusion should never used as a threat or punishment.

If ever a child is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation and they need time and space to calm they will always be supervised and will always be supported in a safe space that feels comforting to them.

If there is ever any incident involving the use of seclusion, it will be recorded and reported in accordance with the procedures set out in section 12 of this policy.

Any incident involving a restrictive intervention will be ceased as soon as the risk has reduced.

Time-Out

A planned behaviour support strategy where a pupil chooses or is supported to move to a calmer environment and remains free to leave.

5. Principles

Our school does not have a 'no contact' policy. We do not grant any requests by parents/carers or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions.

There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to have some physical contact with pupils which does not give rise to any question over the use of reasonable force or other restrictive interventions.

Examples include:

- Providing first aid to a pupil
- Guiding or escorting a pupil through the school building or on a school trip by holding their hand
- Comforting a pupil who is upset
- Offering congratulations or praise, such as with a pat on the back or handshake
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- When demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching

In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in any given situation, staff should use their professional judgement, and have regard to:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- The specific circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present

All staff will adhere to the following principles:

Safety First

The safety of pupils, staff and others is paramount.

Last Resort

Restrictive interventions should only be used when necessary and when less restrictive approaches have been ineffective or are inappropriate due to immediate risk.

Least Restrictive Option

Staff will always use the minimum intervention necessary and they will always use alternative strategies that don't involve physical contact if possible.

Proportionality

Any intervention must be proportionate to the risk presented.

Dignity and Respect

Pupils must be treated respectfully throughout any intervention.

Individual Needs

Particular consideration must be given to:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) including communication difficulties
- Mental health needs
- Medical conditions
- Trauma experiences
- Age

6. Circumstances Where Reasonable Force May Be Used

Staff may use reasonable force to:

Prevent Injury to themselves or others

To prevent a pupil from:

- Hurting themselves
- Hurting another pupil
- Hurting a member of staff
- Hurting a visitor

Prevent Serious Damage or committing a criminal offence

To prevent significant damage to:

- Property
- School buildings
- Equipment

Prevent Serious Disorder among pupils, in or out of lessons

To prevent behaviour that seriously disrupts teaching, learning or safety.

Maintain Safety

To prevent a pupil:

- Running into traffic
- Leaving a safe area where there is significant risk.
- Accessing dangerous objects or substances.

7. Circumstances Where Force Must Not Be Used

Force must never be used:

- as a punishment, sanction, threat or deterrent
- to secure compliance where there is no risk

- because a pupil refuses an instruction
- to humiliate, intimidate or coerce
- for staff convenience
- in a manner likely to cause pain or injury except where unavoidable to prevent greater harm
- in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation, for example by covering their nose and/or mouth or applying pressure to their neck or abdomen
- on the ground. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their hold or move into a safer position as quickly as possible

Our staff understand that any form of force or restraint carries a risk of physical and psychological harm, so we always avoid using these measures where possible.

8. Using reasonable force to search pupils

The headteacher and any member of staff authorised by the headteacher have a statutory power to search a pupil or their belongings if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item (as listed in the DfE's searching, screening and confiscation guidance) or an item banned under our school rules.

They **can** use reasonable force to search for prohibited items (as listed in the DfE's searching, screening and confiscation guidance), such as knives, weapons, stolen items or illegal drugs. They **cannot** use reasonable force to search for items that are banned under our school rules only, such as mobile phones.

The decision to use reasonable force to carry out a search should be made carefully, on a case-by-case basis and taking into consideration the level of risk to pupils and staff.

9. Prevention and De-escalation

Restrictive intervention is used only when necessary. We aim to minimise its use as much as possible, using both whole-school and individual approaches. The school prioritises prevention.

Our whole-school approach includes:

- Positive relationships
- Clear routines and expectations
- Behaviour support plans
- Early intervention
- Active listening
- Calm communication
- Diversion and distraction
- Negotiation and problem-solving
- Environmental adjustments
- Sensory regulation strategies
- Restorative approaches
- Recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning

The individual approaches we use include:

- Working closely with parents/carers to support individual pupils
- Strategies to support individual pupils based on their identified needs, including:

    - The development of behaviour support plans
    - Strategies to help pupils calm down before their behaviour escalates, this should be detailed on Pupil Profiles

9.1 De-escalation when a situation arises

When a staff member is faced with a situation where a restrictive intervention may need to be used, they should consider using de-escalation techniques first, wherever possible. Techniques that could be used in these situations include:

- Using visuals
- Changing the adult to offer a fresh start
- Distraction techniques
- Offering a calm space for the pupil to go to so they can self-regulate
- Using specific strategies for individuals; written on Pupil Profiles and Behaviour Support Plans (if they have one)

10 Deciding when the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate

Necessity and proportionality

The decision on whether to use restrictive interventions is down to the professional judgment of the staff member and will always depend on the individual circumstances of each situation.

Staff should always consider whether there are other ways to manage the situation, such as the de-escalation techniques outlined in section 6 of this policy and/or seeking assistance from a colleague. However, there may be times when staff have no other choice but to use restrictive interventions, to reduce the risk of harm to the pupil and/or others.

When assessing whether a restrictive intervention is required, staff should always consider:

- **Is it necessary?**
    - Are there other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage the situation?
    - Is a restrictive intervention likely to successfully reduce the risks, or could its use escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself?
- **Is it proportionate?**
    - Staff should use the **least** amount of force or the **least** restrictive intervention for the **least** amount of time required to reduce the risks
    - If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy

- Staff should consider the individual circumstances of the pupil, such as their age, size and any medical conditions, SEND or other vulnerabilities

10.1 Pupil and staff welfare

Pupil welfare

The most important consideration when using a restrictive intervention is the safety and wellbeing of the pupil involved, as well as the safety of other pupils and staff. Staff should always consider the potential impact on the pupil's welfare balanced against any actions taken. For example, staff should bear in mind that all of our pupils have communication difficulties and many have sensory impairments. Pupils who have experienced adverse life events such as trauma or neglect, or who have diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.

Staff should always aim to consider the location and environment where any interventions are used. They should clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening using minimal language or non-verbal strategies as appropriate and giving time for the pupil to process information.

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

Support following an incident

As soon as possible after any use of restrictive intervention, our school will evaluate the incident to understand why restrictive intervention was used, the impact on pupils and staff, any patterns and trends, and how another incident could be avoided in the future.

Our school will make sure each pupil and staff member involved get the right support, including a medical assessment and treatment if needed, and an opportunity to reflect on and talk through the incident.

This follow-up conversation(s) will be part of the overall debriefing process to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from all parties involved. Conversations should also aim to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue.

Wherever possible, this process will be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident. It may also include the presence of an additional person to ensure impartiality and support. The school will continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed.

Depending on the circumstances, support may also be offered to those who witnessed the incident.

11. Risk Assessment and Individual Planning

Where pupils are known to present behaviours that may require restrictive intervention:

The school will:

- Complete risk assessments
- Consult parents/carers
- Involve pupils where appropriate
- Seek professional advice
- Develop Positive Behaviour Support Plans
- Review arrangements regularly

Plans will include:

- Known triggers
- Early warning signs
- Preferred de-escalation strategies
- Specific risks
- Agreed responses
- Post-incident support arrangements

12. Recording and Reporting

All significant restrictive interventions and uses of reasonable force must be recorded on CPOMs before the end of the working day. Staff should do this even if the use of restrictive interventions is agreed as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

Records should include:

- Date and time.
- Location.
- Names of those involved.
- Antecedents/triggers.
- Description of behaviour.
- A brief explanation of why using force was assessed as necessary in that situation
- De-escalation attempts used.
- Type and duration of intervention.
- Outcome.
- Injuries sustained, if applicable.
- Witnesses.
- Follow-up actions including any support given after the incident, such as medical help or emotional support

The Headteacher or designated safeguarding lead will review all incidents.

13. Informing Parents and Carers

Parent/Carers will be informed on the same day that the restrictive intervention or use of reasonable force incident occurs.

When reporting to parents/carers, we will have regard to data protection requirements when deciding what information to share. For example, we will not include any identifying details of any other pupil.

Communication will include:

• Factual description including the time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention

• A brief explanation of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that situation

• A short description of the type and degree of any force that was used

• Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable

When we report seclusion incidents and or restrictive intervention or restraint incidents to parents/carers, we will provide parents/carers with a copy of our written record of the incident.

Parent/Carers will be notified by email, phone call and written copy of incident by the Senior Leadership Team.

13.1 Following up with parents/carers after an incident

It is best practice to invite parents/carers to have a follow-up discussion about the incident, where appropriate. We can offer parents a behaviour forum meeting with the class teacher and inclusion team to discuss:

- Any behavioural triggers or warning signs of an impending incident so that incidents can be avoided
- Whether any agreed behaviour support plans were followed
- What de-escalation strategies were used and how effective they were
- What might be done differently in the future

14. Complaints and Allegations

Any complaints about the use of restrictive interventions will be handled through our school's complaints policy.

We take any allegation of inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions made against a member of staff very seriously. We will deal with allegations in line with the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education.

15. Staff Training

The school will ensure relevant staff receive training in:

- Behaviour support.
- De-escalation.
- Trauma-informed practice.
- SEND awareness.
- Safeguarding.

- Team Teach
- Training will be refreshed regularly.

16. Monitoring and Governance

The Senior Leadership Team will:

- Monitor incident records.
- Analyse patterns and trends.
- Review equality implications.
- Ensure appropriate training.

The Governing Body will receive anonymised reports on:

- Frequency of incidents.
- Emerging themes.
- Training compliance.

17. Equality and Human Rights

The school recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998.

Particular care will be taken to ensure:

- Pupils with disabilities are not disadvantaged.
- Interventions are not discriminatory.
- Decisions are based on individual risk and need.
- Reasonable adjustments will be made where appropriate.

Approved by The Governing Body: July 2026

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