



Portsmouth
High School

GDST
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST

Restrictive Intervention Policy

Pre-School, Prep, Senior and Sixth Form

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Part of the Girls' Day School Trust family of schools

RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTION POLICY

Introduction

At Portsmouth High School we aim to create a calm and purposeful learning environment and promote high standards of behaviour and respectful relationships. Situations in which restrictive intervention is called for are extremely rare. However, we recognise that there will be some circumstances where such intervention is unavoidable or the most appropriate course of action, and this policy sets out the framework within which this may occur. Our aim is to:

- Safeguard pupils and staff
- Prevent serious breaches of school discipline or serious damage to property
- Ensure that staff are confident in employing restrictive intervention appropriately if this is necessary

Links to other policies, advice and guidance

This policy has been developed with regard to the following sources of advice and guidance:

- [Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools](#) April 2026
- [Safe and effective intervention: use of reasonable force and searching for weapons](#) Wales March 2013
- [Searching, screening and confiscation: guidance for schools](#) July 2022
- [Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention](#) June 2019
- [Wales Reducing Restrictive Practices Framework](#) October 2022
- [What does good PBS look like?](#) PBS Alliance May 2022

It should be read in conjunction with the following GDST and school policies:

- Discipline and Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and GDST safeguarding guidance
- Drugs and Alcohol Policy and GDST Drugs and Alcohol Guidance

Minimising the need for restrictive intervention

The school aims to create a culture in which the need for restrictive intervention is minimised. We cultivate good relationships and respect between staff and pupils. In accordance with our Discipline and Behaviour for Learning Policy, all staff adopt a positive approach to managing behaviour, focusing on consistency and a respect for rules, and rewarding courtesy and good conduct. The PSHE programme and other opportunities across the curriculum are used to teach pupils how to manage emotions and conflict. Pupils

who struggle with self-regulation are provided with appropriate support. There is a staged approach to sanctions which is known and understood by all.

Situations which present a foreseeable risk are routinely risk assessed, with the aim of minimising the likelihood of incidents. All staff are trained in positive behaviour management and de-escalation techniques.

Where a pupil exhibits potentially challenging behaviour, the immediate priority will be early and preventative intervention. Wherever possible staff are advised to:

- Calmly re-state the rules and expectations for the situation
- Ask other pupils to leave the area, or
- Suggest the pupil takes 'time out' in a safe space
- Keep a distance and avoid encroaching on personal space
- Avoid mirroring physical disturbance – try to remain still and model steady breathing
- Give the pupil options so they have a sense of agency and an opportunity to resolve the situation in a dignified manner
- If there is an external danger, use minimal force/positive handling to gently guide them away
- Use other techniques designed to defuse the situation such as distraction or humour

Understanding restrictive interventions

Reasonable force

'Reasonable force' is a term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances. Reasonable means using **no more force than is necessary** for the **least amount of time**, the application of which will depend on the circumstances. It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment.

Reasonable force 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

Reasonable force may also be used to search a pupil for legally prohibited items (but not for items only banned under the school rules) if there are reasonable grounds to suspect the pupil may have a prohibited item.

Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving. It should only be used as a safety measure to

protect others from harm. The place to which the pupil is confined should be safe and not feel threatening or intimidating. The pupil should be supervised at all times and allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced.

Seclusion is not a disciplinary response and different from removal from the classroom, which is a disciplinary measure (for further information on removal from the classroom, see the school's Discipline and Behaviour for Learning Policy).

Practical guidance

Generally, no- or low-level contact techniques/positive handling can be used to manage most behaviour, for example, body positioning, positive gestures or gentle contact to comfort, reassure or guide a pupil away from risk or block their movements. For younger pupils, this positive handling can be used to control the child's movements in order to keep them from harm or danger. The level of contact and force that would be acceptable to achieve this would be similar to the actions that a reasonable parent would do to keep their own child safe.

In some situations, it may be necessary to use a restrictive intervention that involves restraint and/or the use of force, including on pupils who are not a known risk and for whom there is no Positive Handling Plan in place. To determine when the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate, members of staff should consider the following:

Is it necessary?

- Are there other, less restrictive ways to manage a situation?
- Is the intervention likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks, or would it escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself?
- Where possible the broader risks in the environment should be considered

Is it proportionate?

- The **least amount of force** or **least restrictive intervention** should be used for the **least amount of time** required to reduce the relevant risks
- If the intervention is escalating the situation, the approach should be reconsidered, and an alternative strategy be attempted
- Staff should consider the personal circumstances/attributes of the pupil, such as medical conditions, age and size, protected characteristics

Has the pupil's welfare been considered?

- Consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare balanced against any actions taken
- Seek to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity
- Where possible clearly and calmly communicate what is happening, why and what the pupil needs to do
- Consider any communication difficulties and use verbal and non-verbal strategies to ensure the pupil understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond
- Seek to understand how the pupil is feeling to determine whether the intervention should (continue to) be applied, reduced or stopped

This list of factors is not exhaustive, and staff should also take into account other relevant considerations. If an assessment has been made to use restrictive interventions staff should be supported in their decision making.

Dos and Don'ts

DO

- Issue a verbal warning and provide opportunity for the student to alter their behaviour before intervening
- If possible, request adult assistance before intervening (however it may be necessary to act before the assistance arrives)
- Use simple and clear language
- Tell the pupil (and any witnesses) what you are doing and why even if the pupil does not respond
- Hold limbs above a major joint, if possible, e.g. above the elbow
- Tell the pupil what they must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition)
- Release the pupil slowly and safely when it is felt they are sufficiently in control of their actions

DON'T

- Put yourself at risk
- Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- Employ physical intervention as a punishment. Corporal punishment is against the law
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil
- Use coercion, humiliation, or any other form of social or psychological restraint, even as an alternative to restrictive intervention
- Touch or hold the pupil in sexual areas: where at all possible all contact should be restricted to arms, shoulders and the back
- Slap, punch, kick or trip up the pupil
- Deliberately inflict pain e.g., twist or force limbs back against a joint, bend fingers or pull hair
- Hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g., around the neck, lying face down or pulling arms across the child's chest
- Involve other pupils in the restraint
- Confine a pupil in a room unsupervised for any reason

Vulnerable pupils

Certain pupils may exhibit challenging behaviour which can make them more vulnerable to experiencing restrictive intervention. They may find some approaches particularly distressing and may find some situations challenging or traumatising.

This includes (but is not limited to) pupils who:

- Have special educational needs or disabilities
- Are experiencing mental health difficulties
- Have experienced trauma, for example looked after children, refugee children, those living with domestic abuse and those with child protection plans

Reasonable adjustments will be made to meet the needs of these pupils appropriately.

Positive Handling Plans

All pupils who have been identified as presenting a relevant risk should have a Positive Handling Plan. The plan should include:

- An assessment of the pupil's behaviour, what the behaviour means and what matters to the pupil
- What coping strategies and social skills are being taught
- A hierarchy of responses ranging from prevention (how to meet the pupil's needs so that they are not distressed / avoiding triggers), to early identification of anxiety and agitation, de-escalation strategies and ultimately reactive strategies to manage behaviours that are not preventable
- Where appropriate, agreed forms of restraint and circumstances in which this will be used
- Responses to avoid
- Post-incident strategies
- Members of staff responsible for implementation

Plans should take into account age, gender, level of physical, emotional and intellectual development, special needs/disabilities, medical conditions and social context/cultural background. They should involve all relevant professionals and be co-produced with the pupil and their family. The plan should be reviewed periodically and after any incident involving a restrictive intervention.

Statutory recording and reporting duties

Each significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil, and each incident of seclusion or restraint, must be recorded in writing on CPOMS as soon as practicable (and in any event that same day). This requirement applies even if the intervention has been agreed with parents as part of a behaviour plan.

As a minimum, the CPOM record should include:

- names of pupil and staff directly involved
- any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code
- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- brief account of the incident, including what led up to the incident, identified or potential triggers if known, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used, and (where relevant) what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of any physical injuries sustained (in addition, any injuries should be recorded in accordance with the school's health and safety procedures and reported as appropriate to the Health and Safety Executive).
- brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
- any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

Parents must be provided with written information about the incident the same day wherever possible, even where interventions form part of an agreed behaviour support plan for the child. This should include:

- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
- brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force
- details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable.

If a report cannot be made to a parent because it would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil, it must be made to the pupil's local authority instead.

Post-incident support and review

There are two main components of post incident practice, each with a distinct purpose:

- I. Post incident support: attention to physical and emotional wellbeing of the individuals involved. Incidents involving the use of force can be upsetting to all concerned. It is important to ensure that all staff and pupils involved (including witnesses) have appropriate medical assessment, treatment and emotional support. Where applicable, pupil(s) should be checked for injury by a member of staff not involved in the incident.

Following immediate first aid, a staged approach will be employed:

- Immediate: 'are you ok?' - this should occur before staff and pupils leave to go home

- Follow-up conversation(s) to facilitate reflection, learning and support pupil and staff wellbeing. This debriefing should look to understand what happened and why, based on separate reflections from all those involved, as well as to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue
 - Monitoring of pupils and staff involved and the offer of further support (e.g. counselling) if needed.
2. Post incident review: to learn from the incident and reflect on practice. This should be clearly separated from post incident support. Any incident involving the use of restrictive intervention will be evaluated to understand why it was used, the impact on pupils and staff, any patterns and trends, and how it might be avoided in future.

Staff training

All school staff receive training in understanding behaviour, positive behaviour management, assessing and managing risk, and de-escalation strategies. Designated members of staff receive further specialist training in the safe and lawful use of restrictive interventions, understanding children and young people with challenging behaviour, and developing the understanding, skills and techniques to respond to their needs and keep them safe.

The school maintains up to date records of all staff training, including details of which staff have received specialist training. Staff should only use intervention techniques for which they have received training and can demonstrate competence. The school will only use courses certified as meeting RRN Training Standards.

Complaints

Complaints about the use of force will be thoroughly, speedily and appropriately investigated, following the school's normal complaints procedure. If an allegation regarding inappropriate restrictive interventions is made against a member of staff, the procedures in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* will be followed.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Template Restrictive Intervention Incident Report Form

Appendix 2: Template Positive Handling Plan

Appendix I

Template Restrictive Intervention Incident Report Form

Date/time/duration of incident:
Location:
Student(s) involved (include form/year group and any relevant needs or circumstances e.g. SEND and SEN status code):
Member(s) of staff involved:
Adult witnesses:
Pupil witnesses:
Description of incident – include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What led up to incident• Identified or potential triggers if known• Any preventative or de-escalation strategies used• What type of intervention was used, and (where relevant) degree of force

Rationale for use of restrictive intervention:

Impact (emotional/physical, including details of any injuries):

Parent/carer contact (include date/time):

Follow up action/post-incident treatment/support:

Outcome of incident review:

Appendix 2

Template Positive Handling Plan

Name:	
Year group/form:	
Behavioural assessment:	
Coping strategies/skills being taught:	
Hierarchy of intervention	
Meeting pupil's needs, known triggers and how to avoid:	
Identifying agitation/de-escalation strategies:	

Preferred physical intervention strategies:	
Responses to avoid:	
Post-incident strategies:	
Form completed by (member of staff):	
Signed (pupil):	
Signed (parent/carer):	
Signed (DSL):	
Date/review date:	