



HEADLANDS SCHOOL  
SINCE 1965

# Restrictive Intervention Policy

Written by	Lead Practitioner - Student Welfare		
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# Headlands School

## 1. Introduction

This policy sets out Headlands School's approach to restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force and restraint. Headlands School recognises that restrictive interventions can have a significant physical and psychological impact on students and staff. They should therefore only ever be used, when necessary, proportionate and lawful, and where less restrictive measures have been attempted or assessed as inappropriate in the circumstances.

We are committed to:

- safeguarding the welfare, dignity and human rights of students
- preventing and minimising the need for restrictive interventions
- supporting staff to manage behaviour safely and confidently
- meeting statutory recording and reporting duties
- using data to continuously improve practice

This policy should be read alongside the:

- Headlands School Positive Discipline Policy
- Headlands School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Headlands School SEND Policy
- Enhanced Resource Provision Policy

This policy is informed by:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (sections 93 and 93A)
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- DfE guidance: Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)

## 2. Definitions

- Restrictive intervention: Any action that prevents, restricts or subdues a student's movement, including physical and non-physical interventions
- Reasonable force: Physical force used by staff to prevent injury, damage, criminal behaviour or serious disorder. It must be the minimum necessary for the shortest time
- Restraint: A non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises or limits a student's movement, with or without physical contact
- Seclusion: A non-disciplinary safety measure involving keeping a student in a place away from others and preventing them from leaving
- Significant incident: Any incident where force goes beyond everyday physical contact and requires formal recording and reporting

Where this policy uses the word '**must**', this indicates a legal requirement. Where it uses '**should**', this indicates expected practice unless there is good reason not to follow it.

## SECTION 1 - USING RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTION

### 3. Prevention and de-escalation

Headlands School prioritises proactive strategies to minimise the need for restrictive interventions, including:

- positive behaviour support approaches
- consistent routines and expectations
- trauma-informed practice
- environmental adaptations
- early identification of triggers
- effective communication strategies
- strong relationships between staff and students

Individual support may include behaviour support plans, reasonable adjustments, sensory strategies and joint working with parents <sup>1</sup>and external professionals.

#### 3.1 Staff training

Headlands School recognises that staff training is a critical component of preventing the need for restrictive interventions and ensuring that, where they are used, they are applied safely, lawfully and proportionately.

In line with the April 2026 Department for Education guidance, staff who are likely to work in situations where restrictive interventions may be required will receive appropriate training in behaviour support, prevention and de-escalation strategies, and the safe and lawful use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions.

Training will reflect the principles of this guidance and will support staff to assess necessity and proportionality, understand risks to physical and psychological wellbeing, recognise the impact of trauma and SEND, and make defensible professional judgements, including in situations where decisions must be taken quickly.

Headlands School will ensure that training needs are informed by the school's student cohort, patterns and trends in incidents, and risk assessments. As an employer, the school will take reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff, including providing refresher training, access to advice and support, and additional guidance where staff regularly work with students who present a higher level of risk.

### 4. When restrictive interventions may be used

Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, restraint and seclusion, may only be used in **exceptional circumstances** where they are **lawful, necessary and proportionate**, and where other less restrictive measures have been attempted or assessed as inappropriate in the circumstances.

In line with the April 2026 Department for Education guidance, restrictive interventions may only be used to prevent a student from:

- causing injury to themselves or others

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this policy, 'parent' includes carers and any person with parental responsibility, and in relevant circumstances a local authority acting in that role.

- committing a criminal offence
- causing serious damage to property
- causing significant disorder

The decision to use a restrictive intervention is a matter of **professional judgement** and must always be based on the specific circumstances at the time. Before using, or continuing to use, a restrictive intervention, staff must, wherever practicable, consider the following factors, which are drawn directly from the guidance:

### **Necessity**

Staff should consider whether a restrictive intervention is required to reduce an immediate risk of harm and whether other less restrictive strategies, including de-escalation, redirection or support from other staff, are likely to be effective. Where a restrictive intervention is unlikely to successfully reduce risk or is likely to escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself, it should not be used. Restrictive intervention should not be used for compliance.

### **Proportionality**

Any restrictive intervention must be the **least restrictive option available**, using the **minimum amount of force** for the **shortest amount of time** necessary to reduce the risk. If an intervention is not reducing risk or is escalating the situation, staff must reconsider their approach and seek to reduce or cease the intervention as soon as it is safe to do so.

### **Student welfare and dignity**

Staff must consider the impact of any restrictive intervention on the student's physical and psychological wellbeing. Where possible, staff should seek to maintain the student's dignity, including consideration of the environment in which the intervention takes place, and should communicate calmly and clearly with the student about what is happening and why.

### **Vulnerabilities and SEND**

Staff must have regard to the individual needs and circumstances of the student, including any special educational needs, disabilities, medical conditions, communication needs, sensory sensitivities, past trauma or other vulnerabilities. These factors may affect how a student experiences an intervention and must inform decision-making before, during and after any restrictive intervention.

### **Equality implications**

Staff must consider relevant duties under the Equality Act 2010, including the need to avoid discrimination, make reasonable adjustments and ensure that responses do not disproportionately impact students who share protected characteristics.

Restrictive interventions must never be used as a punishment, as a disciplinary sanction, or for the purpose of compliance or convenience. They must only be used as a last resort safety measure and must cease as soon as the immediate risk has reduced.

Following any restrictive intervention, staff must ensure that appropriate post-incident actions are taken in line with this policy, including recording and reporting, medical checks where appropriate, reflection and review.

#### **4.1 Statutory power to use reasonable force (Education and Inspections Act 2006)**

Under section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006<sup>2</sup>, all members of school staff have a statutory power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances to prevent a student from causing injury to themselves or others, committing a criminal offence, damaging property, or causing disorder.

This power applies while staff are lawfully in charge of students and extends to situations both on and off school sites, including educational visits. Section 93 provides the legal basis for the use of reasonable force in schools, and any such use must be reasonable in the circumstances, meaning that it must be necessary and proportionate to the risks presented at the time.

In addition, section 93A of the Act places a statutory duty on governing bodies and proprietors to ensure that arrangements are in place for recording and reporting significant incidents involving the use of force. This policy reflects both the legal power under section 93 and the statutory recording and reporting duties under section 93A and must be implemented in a way that is consistent with wider safeguarding, equality, human rights and health and safety obligations.

#### **4.2 Unacceptable use of restrictive intervention**

Restrictive interventions must never be used as a punishment, a disciplinary sanction, or for the purpose of compliance, convenience or to manage behaviour where there is no immediate risk of harm. Any use of force or restrictive practice for these purposes is unlawful.

Staff must not use any techniques or approaches that may restrict or interfere with a student's airway, breathing or circulation. This includes, but is not limited to, applying pressure to the neck, throat, chest or abdomen, covering the mouth or nose, or positioning a student in a way that compromises respiration. Such practices present a serious and potentially fatal medical risk and are strictly prohibited.

The use of restrictive interventions carries inherent physical and psychological risk, particularly where they occur on the ground.

Ground restraint should therefore be avoided wherever possible. Where a student is unintentionally brought to the ground, staff must take immediate steps to reduce risk by repositioning or releasing holds as soon as it is safe to do so and moving to a safer alternative or standing position.

Any restrictive intervention that presents, or begins to present, a medical risk must stop immediately. Where a student has been restrained, particularly where there has been any impact to breathing, circulation, consciousness or physical injury, staff must seek medical assessment and treatment as soon as practicable.

Staff must also be mindful that restrictive interventions can cause significant psychological distress. Interventions that humiliate, degrade, intimidate, threaten or deliberately cause emotional harm are unacceptable. All responses must seek to preserve the student's dignity and wellbeing, even in high-risk situations.

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<sup>2</sup> Education and Inspections Act 2006, Section 93 (reasonable force):  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/section/93>

Any incident involving unacceptable practice, or where there is concern that an intervention may have compromised a student's safety, must be reported immediately in line with Headlands School's safeguarding and child protection policy, consideration should be given to any other relevant reporting requirements.

### **4.3 Appropriate physical contact**

Appropriate physical contact (for example, first aid, comfort, guiding or PE instruction) is lawful and sometimes necessary. Staff must use professional judgement and consider safeguarding context, student age, vulnerability and alternative strategies.

### **4.4 Reasonable force for searching students**

Under statutory powers<sup>3</sup>, the Headteacher and staff authorised by the Headteacher may search a student or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the student is in possession of a prohibited item. Prohibited items are those set out in legislation and include, for example, knives or weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items and any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property.

Where a lawful search is taking place for a prohibited item, staff may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to conduct that search. Any use of force in this context must be necessary, proportionate and for the shortest possible time, and must be consistent with the principles set out in this policy.

Reasonable force must not be used to search for items that are banned only under the school's own rules. Where force is used during a search, this will be treated as a restrictive intervention and must be managed in line with this policy, including consideration of the student's welfare, dignity, vulnerabilities and any SEND or medical needs.

Any significant incident involving the use of force during a search must be recorded and reported in accordance with statutory duties.

All searches must be carried out in accordance with the school's Searching, Screening and Confiscation procedures, and staff involved in searching students will receive appropriate guidance and training. Further guidance is available in the positive discipline policy.

## **5. Seclusion**

Seclusion is defined in statutory guidance as a non-disciplinary, short-term safety measure and may only be used where a student is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation and there is a serious and immediate risk of harm to the student or to others. Seclusion must never be used as a punishment, a sanction, a planned behaviour management strategy, or as a response to deliberate non-compliance where there is no immediate risk.

Seclusion must only ever be used to reduce an immediate risk of harm and must not be used to coerce, threaten or control a student. It should not be implemented through the threat of punishment or the suggestion that negative consequences will follow if a student attempts to leave.

Where seclusion is used, the place in which the student is confined must be safe, suitable and non-threatening, taking account of the student's age, needs, vulnerabilities and sensory

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<sup>3</sup> Section 550ZA of the Education Act 1996

sensitivities. The environment must not present a risk to the student's physical or psychological wellbeing and should allow the student to calm and regain regulation.

A student who is secluded must be always supervised by a member of staff. Supervision must be active and purposeful, enabling staff to monitor the student's physical and emotional wellbeing, communicate appropriately, and respond immediately if the student becomes distressed, unwell or at risk.

Seclusion must end as soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced. It must not continue beyond the point at which it is necessary to manage risk, and students must be supported to rejoin others safely when they are able to do so.

Any incident involving seclusion must be treated as a significant safeguarding event. All incidents of seclusion must be recorded and reported in line with statutory duties<sup>4</sup>. Following any use of seclusion, appropriate post-incident actions must take place, including welfare checks, reflection, support and review of preventative strategies.

## SECTION 2 - POST INCIDENT

### 6. Record keeping

Headlands School recognises that incidents involving restrictive interventions are **significant safeguarding events**<sup>5</sup>.

The governing body / proprietor ensures that clear procedures are in place for the **recording and reporting** of all relevant incidents.

#### 6.1 Recording of significant incidents involving the use of force

All **significant incidents** involving the use of reasonable force must be recorded in writing **as soon as practicable after the event**, and staff should endeavour to complete records **no later than the same day**.

Records must be completed by the staff member(s) involved via the embedded restrictive intervention form within CPOMS. This must provide a clear, factual account of the incident. As a minimum, records will include:

- the name of the student and the names of staff directly involved
- the date, time, location and approximate duration of the incident
- a brief account of what happened, including any known context, antecedents, triggers and behaviours of concern
- details of any preventative or de-escalation strategies attempted prior to the use of force
- where relevant, the type of reasonable force used, and the degree of force applied
- a brief explanation of why the use of force was assessed as necessary at the time
- details of any physical injuries, distress or welfare concerns
- details of any immediate and ongoing post-incident support, including medical attention where provided

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<sup>4</sup> (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025 and section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

<sup>5</sup> In accordance with section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025

The requirement to record applies even where the use of restrictive interventions has been discussed or anticipated within a behaviour support plan.

## 6.2 Reporting of significant incidents involving the use of force

Parents must be informed in writing of each significant incident involving the use of force **as soon as practicable after the incident**, and Headlands School should endeavour to do this **no later than the same day**, unless a statutory exception applies.

Reports to parents will include, as a minimum:

- the date, time, location and approximate duration of the incident
- a brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary
- a brief description of what type of force was used and the degree of force applied
- details of any physical injuries or welfare concerns, where applicable

Headlands School will normally invite parents to discuss the incident, including any relevant triggers, the effectiveness of preventative strategies, and whether any behaviour support plans or risk assessments require review.

Exceptions to the duty to report apply only where:

- the student is aged 20 or over, or
- it appears that informing a particular parent would be likely to result in serious harm to the student. In such cases, the incident will be reported to any parent to whom it can safely be reported, or, where this is not possible, to the relevant local authority.

## 6.3 Recording and reporting of seclusion and non-force restraint

All incidents involving **seclusion or restraint without physical force** must be recorded and reported<sup>6</sup>.

This includes incidents where restrictive interventions are used in line with an agreed behaviour support plan. Records must be completed as soon as practicable and no later than the same day wherever possible.

Where an incident of restraint also constitutes a significant use of force, Headlands School schools will follow the significant incident reporting procedure set out above.

The same information will not be reported twice. Where an incident involves seclusion or restraint without physical force and does not constitute a significant use of force, the reporting duties under the 2025 Regulations will apply.

## 7. Post-incident support and review

Following any restrictive intervention, the school will ensure that appropriate and timely actions are taken to safeguard the physical and emotional wellbeing of all those involved, to understand what happened and why, and to reduce the likelihood of future incidents.

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<sup>6</sup> in accordance with the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025. Where required, incidents will also be reported in accordance with health and safety reporting requirements.

## **7.1 Immediate welfare and medical checks**

As soon as practicable after the incident, staff will check the student and any staff involved for signs of injury, distress or illness. Where appropriate, first aid will be administered and medical assessment or treatment sought. Any injuries or health concerns will be recorded in line with the school's health and safety procedures and reported to the Health and Safety Executive where required.

## **7.2 Emotional wellbeing and safeguarding support**

Headlands School recognises that restrictive interventions can be distressing. Consideration will therefore be given to the emotional wellbeing needs of the student, any staff involved, and any students who may have witnessed the incident. Support may include access to pastoral staff, counselling services, trusted adults or other appropriate support mechanisms.

## **7.3 Reflective debrief and learning**

The school will hold reflective debrief conversations following incidents involving restrictive interventions. These discussions are intended to support wellbeing, enable learning and improvement, and reduce future risk. Where appropriate, debriefs will include:

- a factual review of what happened and why
- reflection on early warning signs and triggers
- consideration of what preventative and de-escalation strategies were used and their effectiveness
- identification of any alternative approaches that may reduce the likelihood of recurrence

Where possible, debriefs should be facilitated by a member of staff who was not directly involved in the incident, and may include the student and their parent where appropriate.

## **7.4 Review of support and risk management**

Following any restrictive intervention, the school will review relevant behaviour support plans, risk assessments and reasonable adjustments. Changes will be made where necessary to better support the student, address underlying needs, and strengthen preventative measures.

## **7.5 Repairing relationships and reintegration**

Headlands School are committed to repairing and rebuilding relationships following incidents involving restrictive interventions. Where appropriate, restorative approaches will be used to support the student's reintegration, rebuild trust between students and staff, and promote a sense of safety, dignity and belonging.

## **7.6 Monitoring and escalation**

Leaders will monitor incidents and post-incident actions to identify patterns, emerging risks or training needs. Where restrictive interventions occur repeatedly or where concerns arise, this will trigger further review, multi-agency engagement where appropriate, and escalation through safeguarding or SEND processes. The trust will undertake assurance checks looking at weekly data and monitoring the number of incidents to ensure they are reasonable, proportionate and necessary.

## SECTION 3 - LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT OF RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTION

### 8. Governance

The governing body recognises that the use of restrictive interventions is a significant safeguarding matter and will provide appropriate oversight to ensure that practice across the trust schools is lawful, proportionate and focused on prevention.

In line with statutory duties and the April 2026 Department for Education guidance, the governing body will ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to support the effective implementation of this policy and the associated recording and reporting requirements.

In fulfilling this responsibility, the governing body will:

- ensure that this policy is implemented and reviewed regularly
- assure itself that statutory recording and reporting duties are being met
- receive and consider information about the use of restrictive interventions, including emerging patterns or trends
- be mindful of any disproportionate impact on students with special educational needs and disabilities or other identified vulnerabilities
- use information from incidents to inform discussion about prevention, training and support
- ensure that staff are appropriately supported and trained
- ensure that learning from incidents contributes to the ongoing development of practice

Oversight of restrictive interventions will form part of the governing body's wider safeguarding and student wellbeing responsibilities.

### 9. Complaints

Any complaints raised in relation to the use of restrictive interventions will be managed in accordance with Headlands School complaints procedure.

Where an allegation is made that a member of staff has used restrictive interventions inappropriately, unlawfully or in a way that may have placed a student at risk, the matter will be managed in line with **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)** and Headlands School safeguarding and allegations management procedures.

Where appropriate, the school will work with external agencies to ensure concerns are managed in accordance with statutory guidance. This includes consideration of whether the concern meets the threshold for referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and whether any immediate safeguarding or risk management actions are required.

Headlands School will ensure that allegations are considered objectively, based on the available evidence, and that appropriate support is provided to all parties involved.

Learning arising from complaints and allegations will be used to inform training, policy review and preventative practice.