



The Park Federation Academy Trust

Use of Reasonable Force Policy 2026

Version History

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Approval

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CEO

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1. Introduction and Purpose

This policy sets out The Park Federation Academy Trust's approach to the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, in line with the Department for Education's guidance "Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools" (April 2026).

The use of restrictive interventions can have a significant impact on pupils, staff members and parents involved, as well as the wider classroom. However, there are times when the use of restrictive interventions will be lawful and necessary; for example, to keep individuals and the wider school community safe.

Our primary aim is to proactively minimise the need to use restrictive interventions through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies, and when necessary, to help school staff feel confident in knowing how to use these interventions safely, appropriately and lawfully.

2. Legal Framework

This policy has been developed in accordance with:

- The Education and Inspections Act 2006, especially sections 93 and 93A
- The Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Equality Act 2010

3. Key Definitions

Restrictive intervention: A means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This includes both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways.

Non-disciplinary intervention: An action taken to solely maintain safety or well-being, rather than penalising a pupil for breaking a rule.

Reasonable force: 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.

Significant incident: Any incident where force exceeds appropriate physical contact (such as a hand on the shoulder for guidance). For further examples on appropriate physical contact, see Section 7. This includes physical force used to enforce a non-physical intervention, for example, physically moving a pupil who refuses to enter a safe space.

Seclusion: A non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others, and preventing them from leaving either by physical obstruction, blocking the way, or making them believe there could be a further consequence if they try to leave.

Restraint: A non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact. This is the specific act of restricting a pupil from moving. This can be:

- Direct - a Team Teach hold
- Indirect - blocking their path

4. Who Can Use Reasonable Force?

All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances.

Staff may use reasonable force to prevent or stop a pupil from:

1. Causing injury to themselves or others
2. Committing a criminal offence
3. Damaging property
4. Causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

5. Staff Training and Risk Assessment

Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions should be adequately trained in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies. At The Park Federation Academy Trust, we use the Team Teach method of intervention and a variety of members of staff are trained to varying levels. Identified staff within The Park Federation Academy Trust have been trained by Team Teach to a sufficient level to be able to train others in their practice. Team Teach training has the following levels available. Please see Appendix E for more information and guidance on this.

At The Park Federation Academy Trust, we will:

- Provide appropriate training to all staff on their Academy behaviour policy, including managing behaviour and preventative strategies.
- Ensure staff who regularly work with pupils where the use of reasonable force may be required receive specific training
- There will be a risk assessment carried out to ensure that staff who regularly work alongside pupils where the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions may be required can do so as safely as possible - this will be documented on an individual TPFAT Risk Assessment for staff.
- Staff who are Team Teach trained **must** have completed a health and fitness questionnaire in order to be trained and subsequently use Team Teach strategies in school. Staff members trained **must** ensure that their line manager is aware of any changes to their health or circumstances that would affect their ability to use the physical strategies safely.
- Review training needs annually and following any significant incidents
- Ensure that staff trained in Team Teach have their training refreshed annually, in line with guidance.

6. Unacceptable Uses of Force

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

The following are strictly prohibited:

- Restraining pupils in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation, for example, by covering the mouth and/or nose, or applying pressure to the neck region or abdomen
- Using force as a form of punishment
- Any intervention that could reasonably be expected to cause injury

If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their holds or re-position into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.

7. Appropriate Physical Contact with Pupils

Schools should not have a 'no contact' policy. Additionally, schools should not grant any requests by parents or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions.

At The Park Federation Academy Trust, we recognise that appropriate physical contact is part of caring for and educating children. Examples of occasions when physical contact is generally appropriate include:

- To give first aid
- To guide or escort pupils, such as holding the hand of a pupil at the front/back of the line when going to assembly, when walking together around the school or on a school trip, or when helping a pupil to a space they have chosen to access to self-regulate
- To comfort a distressed pupil
- To congratulate or praise a pupil, for example, a pat on the back or a handshake
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching
- To facilitate physiotherapy exercises for a pupil following training from an Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist
- To provide or support a pupil with intimate care

When assessing whether physical contact is appropriate, staff should consider:

- The school's child protection policy
- The applicable circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present
- The individual pupil's age
- Whether the pupil has SEND or other vulnerabilities
- Whether any alternative strategies that do not include physical contact can be used

8. Use of reasonable force when performing a search

Principals, and the staff they authorise, have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item. A member of staff can use such force as is reasonable to search for legally prohibited items, but not to search for items banned under the school rules only. Staff should refer to the [Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools](#) guidance document for detailed advice on searching a pupil.

9. Use of Seclusion

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. In such circumstances, the pupil is not acting with intent. Seclusion should not be implemented by staff through the threat of punishment.

If seclusion is used:

- The place to which the pupil is confined should be safe and not feel threatening or intimidating to the pupil/
- The pupil should be supervised at all times during the period of seclusion. Staff may be stationed either inside the room or immediately outside, provided the pupil remains clearly visible and continuously monitored.
- As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil should be allowed to leave.
- The use of seclusion should be recorded and reported to parents/carers. (See Appendix B – Template Letters) ideally on the same day or as reasonably practicable.

10. Determining When Use of Restrictive Interventions is Appropriate

The decision on whether it is reasonable to use a restrictive intervention depends on the individual circumstances of each situation.

Staff must consider three key questions:

10.1 Is it necessary?

- Staff should consider whether there are other, more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation
- Staff should assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks, or whether its use would escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself
- Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment

10.2 Is it proportionate?

- Staff should use the least amount of force or the least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce the relevant risks
- If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy
- Staff should consider the personal circumstances of the pupil, such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010

10.3 Have you considered the pupil's welfare?

Staff must consider:

- The impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken
- Maintaining respect for a pupil's dignity, including considering the location and environment where any intervention is used
- Clearly and calmly communicating to the pupil what is happening, why, and explaining what the pupil needs to do
- How the pupil is feeling and using this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped

11. Minimising the Need for Restrictive Interventions

At The Park Federation Academy Trust, we are committed to creating an environment that minimises the need for restrictive interventions through:

11.1 Whole-School Measures

- Consideration of how the school and classroom environment can support all pupils to achieve and thrive
- Sharing best practice for whole-class behaviour management, and for managing communal spaces such as corridors and playgrounds
- Training staff in effective communication strategies, such as using an appropriate tone of voice and empathy to aid de-escalation
- Development of working staff-pupil relationships and trust
- Recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning

11.2 Individual Approaches

- Working closely with parents to support individual pupils
- Strategies to support individual pupils based on their identified needs, including the development of behaviour support plans
- Giving pupils time, space and strategies to calm down before their behaviour escalates

12. Special Considerations for Pupils with SEND

Some children and young people with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Triggers may include pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar situations or environments or feelings of fear and anxiety.

At The Park Federation Academy Trust, we will:

- Seek to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour
- Create an inclusive environment and consider the impact of school policies on pupils with SEND
- Utilise staff who know individual pupils well to help identify and manage risk
- Work with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies

12.1 De-escalation Strategies for Pupils with SEND

Depending on the circumstances, examples of strategies may include:

- Removing stimuli that may be causing distress
- Changing body language, facial expression, and/or tone of voice
- Supporting the pupil to express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- Engaging the pupil in an activity which can help them manage their feelings of anxiety
- Distracting the pupil with something that interests them or by introducing familiar objects and activities to redirect their attention
- Staff members could use a shared script with specific children to help de-escalate situations.

12.2 Behaviour support plans for children with SEND

Where appropriate, school staff should work with pupils with SEND and their parents in the co-production of any necessary behaviour support plans. Schools, where appropriate, should utilise external agency partnerships and guidance in order to inform the creation of behaviour support plans.

Behaviour support plans should outline any adjustments, such as addressing aspects of the school environment which the pupil finds challenging and ways for pupils to communicate their needs effectively.

Any behaviour support plans should be reviewed with the pupil and their parent periodically and following any significant incident, so that changes can be made based on evidence of what has worked and what has not worked in practice for the individual pupil.

13. Recording the Use of Force (Statutory Requirement)

Incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event. It should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved, and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

13.1 What Must Be Recorded

Schools should record the following details as a minimum:

- Names of the 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
- Brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance
- Any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

13.2 Recording Process at The Park Federation Academy Trust

Staff involved in an incident must:

1. Complete the incident record form (see Appendix A for the form that will be used) on the same day, where possible
2. Submit the completed form to the Principal or designated senior leader, who will ensure the form is converted to PDF and uploaded onto CPOMS.
3. Ensure all required information is included as per the statutory requirements above.

14. Reporting the Use of Force to Parents (Statutory Requirement)

Parents must be informed as soon as practicable after the incident and schools should endeavour to do this no later than the same day, in writing.

14.1 What Must Be Reported

A report of the incident made to parents should include the following details as a minimum:

- 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

14.2 Exceptions to Reporting

Exceptions to the requirement to report are where:

- The pupil is aged 20 or over; or
- It appears to the staff member that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. In this instance, the staff member must report the incident to any parent(s) who it can be reported to without resulting in significant harm or, if there are none, to the local authority within whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident.

14.3 Reporting Process at The Park Federation Academy Trust

The Principal or designated senior leader will:

1. Contact parents by telephone on the same day, where possible
2. Communicate this information to parents in writing, for example, via email or online messaging system
3. Invite parents to have a follow-up discussion about the incident, where appropriate

See Appendix B for template letters that can be used to inform parents and carers.

15. Recording and Reporting Seclusion and Non-Force Related Restraint

Incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event. It should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved, and they should endeavour to do this no later than the same day

15.1 What Must Be Recorded

Schools should record the following details as a minimum:

- Names of the pupil and staff directly involved
- Time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- 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
- Brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
- Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- Any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

15.2 Reporting to Parents

Parents must be informed as soon as practicable after the incident, and schools should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

The same exceptions apply as for reporting the use of force (see section 14). See Appendix B for template letters that can be used to inform parents and carers.

16. Post-Incident Support and Review

Schools should evaluate all incidents involving the use of restrictive intervention as soon as practicable after the event to understand why it was used, the impact on pupils and staff, any patterns and trends, and how the use of restrictive interventions might be avoided in future.

16.1 Immediate Actions

- If appropriate, the pupil and staff member involved should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible
- Any injuries should be recorded in accordance with the school's procedures and reported as appropriate to the Health and Safety Executive

16.2 Follow-up Conversations

Schools should, where deemed necessary, hold a follow-up conversation(s) where deemed necessary to facilitate reflection, learning and to support pupil and staff wellbeing. This conversation should be framed as part of the overall debriefing process and look to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from both the staff and pupils involved, as well as to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue.

At The Park Federation Academy Trust:

- This process will be facilitated by a senior leader who was not involved in the incident
- We will continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed, for example, through further follow-up conversations, counselling or other resources
- Any pupil who witnesses an incident of restrictive intervention where a peer may have been injured or become distressed will be provided with appropriate support where necessary

17. Academy Council Responsibilities

The Academy Council must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the school's procedures for recording and reporting the use of force, seclusion and restraint are complied with.

The Academy Council should regularly review and interrogate data on restrictive interventions to ensure school leaders:

- Identify and implement improvements to policies and practices, particularly where approaches have been used for some time but have not been effective

- Identify areas of learning and development for school staff, supporting specific departments and teachers to improve understanding and practice
- Understand pupils' repeat patterns and triggers to interrogate the effectiveness of pupil support measures
- Identify any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to pupils who share protected characteristics, have SEN, or other types of vulnerability

The Academy Council, as part of the Principal's termly report, will receive an update including:

- The number of incidents involving the use of reasonable force
- The number of incidents involving seclusion
- Analysis of patterns and trends
- Actions taken to minimise future incidents
- Staff training undertaken

18. Complaints and Allegations

Any complaints regarding the use of restrictive interventions should be dealt with in accordance with the school's normal complaints procedure.

If an allegation regarding inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions is made against a member of staff, the procedures in Keeping Children Safe in Education should be followed. This includes the provisions regarding the suspension of staff.

19. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Academy Council, or sooner if there are changes to relevant legislation or guidance.

20. Communication of This Policy

This policy will be made available to:

- All staff members via the staff handbook and staff shared drive
- Parents via the school website
- Academy Council via the governance portal

All new staff will receive training on this policy as part of their induction.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- The Academy Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- The Academy Behaviour Policy
- The Academy SEN Policy