



# Restrictive Interventions Policy (including the use of reasonable force)



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## Executive Summary

This **Restrictive Interventions Policy (including the use of reasonable force)** sets out how **ACT Trust** schools meet their statutory duties to safeguard pupils, promote positive behaviour, and maintain safe learning environments. It provides clear guidance on the lawful, proportionate and ethical use of restrictive interventions, in line with Department for Education guidance and inspection expectations.

The policy is underpinned by **ACT Trust values**, including:

- **Putting children’s safety, dignity and welfare first**
- **Inclusive, trauma-informed and relational practice**
- **Respect for individual needs, particularly for pupils with SEND**
- **Professional accountability and reflective practice**

Restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, are recognised as **measures of last resort** and must only be used where necessary to prevent harm. The policy emphasises prevention through therapeutic, relational approaches, de-escalation strategies, and strong staff-pupil relationships, ensuring that any intervention is **necessary, proportionate and time-limited**.

The document outlines:

- The legal framework and key principles governing restrictive intervention
- Preventative strategies used to reduce the need for physical intervention
- Clear procedures for recording, reporting and reviewing incidents
- Expectations for post-incident support, learning and governance oversight
- Additional safeguards for pupils with SEND and other vulnerabilities

This is an **ACT Trust policy**, approved and reviewed at Trust level. While the core principles and requirements apply consistently across all Trust schools, the policy is **individualised by each school** to reflect its specific context, pupil cohort and operational arrangements. School-specific details are clearly identified within the policy.

Through this policy, ACT Trust demonstrates its commitment to safeguarding, inclusion, transparency and continuous improvement, ensuring that restrictive interventions are used only when absolutely necessary and always in the best interests of children.

This policy is aligned with the Department for Education guidance on restrictive interventions (effective April 2026) and should be read alongside Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and the school’s safeguarding and behaviour-related policies.

## Purpose and scope of the policy

This policy applies to all pupils under our care.

All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force. It can also apply to people whom the Headteacher has temporarily put in charge of pupils such as unpaid volunteers or parents.

Reasonable force will only be used when necessary, in accordance with this policy.

## Key principles

In line with DfE guidance, St Michael's Church School recognises that adopting a 'no contact' approach presents significant risks. Such a policy may place staff in a position where they are unable to fulfil their duty of care towards a pupil or prevent them from taking necessary action to reduce or prevent harm. This policy is therefore designed to ensure that staff, pupils and parents are clear about the circumstances in which restrictive intervention may be used.

When considering the use of restrictive intervention, staff must take into account the individual circumstances of the situation and consider whether the intervention is:

- **Necessary** – All less restrictive options have been explored or attempted, and the staff member reasonably believes that intervention is required to reduce the level of risk rather than escalate it.
- **Proportionate** – Only the minimum amount of force necessary is used, for the shortest duration possible, in order to reduce the risk of harm. Staff actions must reflect the pupil's needs, vulnerabilities, and level of distress.
- **Considered** – The pupil's welfare, rights and dignity must be respected at all times. Staff should use appropriate communication strategies throughout the intervention to explain what is happening, what is required of the pupil, and to gain feedback on how the pupil is feeling.

### Emergency situations

In an emergency, staff may need to act immediately to prevent harm. Staff are expected to use their professional judgement to apply the least restrictive intervention necessary to reduce risk. Where staff act lawfully, reasonably and in line with the principles of necessity, proportionality and dignity, they will be supported by school and Trust leadership.

### Human rights and dignity

Restrictive interventions engage pupils' rights to dignity, liberty and private life. Any intervention must therefore be lawful, necessary and proportionate, used for the shortest time possible, and discontinued immediately once the risk has reduced.

### Other forms of physical contact with pupils

It is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are occasions where this is proper and necessary.

Examples of this at St Michael's Church School include:

- Holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school;

- When comforting a distressed pupil;
- When a pupil is being congratulated or praised;
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument;
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching; and
- To give first aid.

It is essential that any use of touch is carried out only with explicit **consent**. Clear communication should be maintained at all times to convey the rationale to the pupil, ensuring their understanding and providing them with the opportunity to withdraw consent at any stage.

## **Legal framework**

This policy has been written drawing on the [Department for Education Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools](#) (April 2026), [Education and Inspections Act \(2006\)](#), [Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention](#) (2019), [Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for schools](#) (July 2022), [Human Rights Act \(1998\)](#), [Equality Act \(2010\)](#), [Behaviour in Schools Guidance \(2024\)](#) and [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2025\)](#)

Where statutory guidance is updated during the life of this policy, ACT Trust schools will have regard to the latest version in force and will update local procedures and training accordingly.

Links to other school policies:

- SEND Policy
- Positive Relationships Policy
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

## **Definitions**

Restrictive intervention: a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue the movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. 'Restrictive interventions' is used as the umbrella term in this policy, to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain a pupil in different ways.

Reasonable force: includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances<sup>1</sup>. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time.

Restraint (physical and non-physical): involves an intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact. For example, holding a pupil's arms to their sides or removing a pupil's crutches would both be considered forms of restraint.

Seclusion: an intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others, and preventing them from leaving.

## **Strategies the school uses to reduce the need for physical intervention**

St Michael's Church School recognises that physical intervention and the use of reasonable force can be distressing for children, their families and carers, and staff members. However, sometimes

this is the only realistic response to a situation. Any decision made will consider what is in the best interest of the child and/or those around them in view of the risks presented.

To minimise the necessity for restrictive interventions, staff at St Michael's Church School prioritise a Therapeutic and Relational approach to pupil support. All staff receive training in effective communication strategies, including appropriate tone and empathetic interactions, to facilitate de-escalation. The Thrive and PACE approaches form the foundation of relational practice within the school, with leadership modelling these principles. Central to this methodology is the cultivation of positive staff-pupil relationships and trust. Further information regarding specific practices—such as considerations of the classroom environment, managing communal spaces and behaviour management strategies—can be found in the school's Positive Relationships Policy.

As a school underpinned by a Therapeutic approach, St Michael's Church School will work in partnership with parents and individual pupils, where appropriate, to review and update personalised provision where this is required, ensuring that comprehensive and up-to-date information regarding effective support strategies is available to all staff (see 'Supporting pupils with SEND and additional vulnerabilities' for more information).

### **When might reasonable force be used at St Michael's Church School:**

The use of Reasonable Force will only ever be used as a **last resort**, when other strategies such as de-escalation, diversion techniques and managing the environment have not been effective. The school's Positive Relationships Policy (Including the use of touch) describes in detail the way that touch can be used to support, comfort or re-direct a pupil to avoid the need for any reasonable force to be used. Staff at the school have been trained in the use of an approach known as 'Guiding and Escorting' as part of the therapeutic approach to help support a child to a place of safety (See Positive Relationships Policy for full details and guidance).

In the following circumstances, reasonable force may be used when other therapeutic approaches have not been effective;

- To prevent a child from hurting or harming themselves or others.
- To prevent a child from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- To prevent a child from committing a criminal offence.
- To prevent a pupil behaving in a way that compromises their safety or that of others at a school event or a school trip or visit.
- To prevent a pupil leaving a space in school where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others.
- To prevent a pupil from causing harm to a member of the school community.
- To stop a physical fight. To restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves or others through physical outbursts.
- To support a search for knives or weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco, fireworks, pornographic images, or articles that staff reasonably suspect have been or are likely to be used to commit an offence or cause harm. **Force may not be used to search for other items banned under the school rules.**

St Michael's Church School will never use force as a punishment under any circumstances. Restraint will never be used in a manner that restricts a pupil's airway, breathing, or circulation. Pupils should not be restrained on the ground. If a ground-level restraint occurs, staff will release their hold immediately and, where necessary, reposition the pupil and themselves into a safer, alternative position.

St Michael's Church School recognises that any form of restraint carries an inherent risk of causing both physical and psychological harm. For this reason, its use will be avoided wherever possible and employed only as a last resort, when no safer or less restrictive alternative is available (see 'Post-incident support and review' for further information).

### **How seclusion might be used at St Michael's Church School:**

Seclusion will only be used as a safety measure to protect others from immediate harm when a pupil is experiencing significant emotional or behavioural dysregulation. Staff at St Michael's Church School recognise that, in such circumstances, the pupil is not acting with intent but is responding to overwhelming distress.

Any location used for seclusion will feel safe for the pupil, and they will be supervised at all times throughout the period of seclusion. As soon as the assessed risk of harm has reduced, the pupil will be allowed to leave the space immediately.

Seclusion will not be implemented through threat of punishment.

### **Reporting and recording**

St Michael's Church School will follow the procedures described below for all incidents involving restrictive intervention, including the use of reasonable force and the use of seclusion. This applies equally in circumstances where specific interventions have been agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

At St Michael's Church School, all incidents of restrictive intervention are recorded on the Restrictive Interventions Recording Form.

Records must be completed as soon as possible after the event, and wherever possible, by the staff member(s) involved. As a minimum, this record will include:

- The 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
- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- A brief account of the incident, including:
  - the antecedents to the use of restrictive intervention, including any identified or potential triggers
  - any preventative or de-escalation strategies used
  - the type of reasonable force applied/seclusion used, the degree of force (if used), and details of any physical injuries sustained as required
- The behaviour the pupil was exhibiting that resulted in the need for restrictive intervention
- Any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

St Michael's Church School will inform parents whenever reasonable force has been used with their child as soon as practicable after the incident, and wherever possible, no later than the same day. In exceptional circumstances, notification may be delayed where doing so would place the pupil or another person at increased risk of harm, or where the school is advised by external agencies (e.g, children's social care or the police) that immediate contact with parents/carers may compromise safeguarding enquiries. Any decision to delay notification will

be authorised by the Headteacher (or a senior leader in their absence), recorded with the rationale on the Restrictive Interventions Recording Form, and parents/carers will be informed as soon as it is safe and appropriate to do so.

As a minimum, the report will include:

- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- A brief account of the behaviour the pupil was exhibiting that resulted in the need for restrictive intervention
- A brief account of what type of force was applied/seclusion used, and the degree of force (if used)
- The details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable

A copy of the record will be provided to parents and carers whenever restrictive intervention has been used with their child as soon as practicable after the incident, and wherever possible, no later than the same day. All records will be held on the schools Safeguarding portal, My Concern.

### **Post-incident support and review**

At St Michael's Church School we evaluate and review incidents involving restrictive intervention as soon as possible after the event, to understand:

- The impact on the child/children
- What the risks were and why restraint was the least restrictive option
- What lessons we have learned to improve our practice and avoid the use of restrictive intervention in future

St Michael's Church School will work collaboratively with staff, the pupil, and their parents/carers to review the support in place following any incident. This review will include consideration of any newly identified behavioural triggers or warning signs, the effectiveness of de-escalation strategies used, and any required amendments to the pupil's behaviour support plan and/or risk assessment.

Further follow-up conversations with the pupil and the staff involved will be undertaken to support reflection, learning, and well-being. Where possible, restorative conversations will be held to repair and rebuild relationships. Referrals for additional support will be completed as required.

### **Supporting pupils with SEND and additional vulnerabilities**

Children and young people with SEND, mental health difficulties, or medical conditions may at times present with behaviour that challenges professionals, particularly when they have trouble expressing or regulating their emotions. In some cases, the likelihood of such behaviour can be anticipated by those working closely with the pupil.

Where the use of reasonable force or physical intervention is more likely to be required, St Michael's Church School will ensure that robust arrangements are in place to identify, assess, and manage risk effectively. This will include providing high-quality training for staff and involving children and young people, parents, carers, and advocates as appropriate in decision-making about support. St Michael's Church School will make arrangements to carefully assess each pupil's needs and the underlying causes of their behaviour, including through the development and regular review of Individual support plans and Risk Reduction Plans. Particular consideration will be given to children with vulnerabilities and SEND, and the school will tailor its support accordingly

(as detailed in the Equality Act 2010). This may include taking into account preventative de-escalation strategies such as:

- 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
- The use of relational and therapeutic approaches to supporting behaviour, such as PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy)
- Using agreed language and phrases to support a pupil, as agreed in an individual De-escalation script
- Changing the adult out to help decrease the intensity in a situation

In circumstances where there is an increased likelihood that reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions may be needed, St Michael's Church School will conduct a risk assessment aimed at reducing this likelihood. The risk assessment is known as the Risk Reduction Plan. It will identify potential triggers and outline planned mitigation strategies, including effective de-escalation approaches. All risk assessments and behaviour support plans will be reviewed with the pupil and their parent/carer at appropriate intervals to ensure they remain relevant, proportionate, and aligned with the pupil's evolving needs. The plan would include details of what support works for the individual pupil including key staff and de-escalation phrases. This collaborative review process will support the pupil to participate fully and safely in school life.

### **Staff training**

The Headteacher/Head of School will consider whether members of staff require any additional training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities by also considering the needs of the pupils and the requirements and context of the setting.

At St Michael's Church School staff training includes:

- Cambridgeshire/Peterborough Therapeutic Thinking
- Trauma Informed Practice/Recovery Through Relationships
- Thrive and PACE training
- Guides and Escorts (Part of CTT/PTT)

### **Governance and oversight**

Records of reasonable force are reviewed each time they occur by Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL's), the SENDCo and Safeguarding and SEND governors and strategies are considered where possible to reduce the likelihood of the need for reasonable force. Such incidents are also reported to the Trust Director of Safeguarding and Inclusion.

To monitor, understand and review our practice we analyse our records to consider:

- Improvements to practices
- Areas of learning and development for staff
- Identified patterns and triggers for individual pupils, and the effectiveness of strategies employed

- Any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to pupils who share protected characteristics, including those with SEND

### Complaints, concerns and allegations

St Michael’s Church School will resolve all complaints regarding the use of force as quickly as possible, being mindful of the need to appropriately investigate the incident. Where a member of staff has acted within the law – that is, they have used reasonable force in order to prevent injury, damage to property, disorder or a criminal offence being committed – this will provide a defence to any criminal prosecution or other civil or public law action. When a complaint is made the onus is on the person making the complaint to prove that his/her allegations are true – it is not for the member of staff to show that he/she has acted reasonably. Suspension will not be an automatic response to a member of staff being accused of using excessive force and the school will refer to statutory guidance in relation to this, liaising with the LADO where necessary. As employers, St Michael’s Church School have a duty of care towards their employees and appropriate pastoral care to any member of staff who is subject to a formal allegation following a use of force incident. This will include having a named contact at the school who can provide support.

Complaints should be made in line with St Michael’s Church School complaints policy.

### Policy review

The Policy will be reviewed annually at Trust Level and any changes disseminated to schools.

Below is a template copy of the **Restrictive Interventions Recording Form 2026**.

#### Section A: Pupil Details

Name	
DOB	
Year Group	
SEN Status (Yes/No) and SEN Code	
Other vulnerabilities (if applicable)	

#### Section B: Incident Details

Date	
Time	
Location	
Staff involved (names and roles)	
Other witnesses	

#### Section C: Type of Restrictive Intervention (tick all that apply)

Restrictive intervention:	✓	Any further details:
Significant use of reasonable force		
Seclusion		
Physical restraint		
Non-physical restraint		

Section D: Context and Triggers

Antecedents / triggers	
De-escalation strategies attempted	

Section E: Decision-Making

Why intervention was necessary	
How necessity, proportionality and pupil welfare were considered*	

\* Including whether this was the least restrictive option and used for the shortest time necessary.

Section F: Intervention Details

Description of intervention	
Duration (approx.)	
Degree of force used	

Section G: Injuries or Impact - Include injuries to pupils or staff, where applicable.

Physical injury (pupil or staff)	
Psychological / emotional impact	
Medical attention required	

Section H: SEND and Equality Considerations

Link to behaviour support plan (Yes/No)	
Repeat incident? (Yes/No)	
Risk assessment updated? (Yes/No)	
Equality considerations	

Section I: Parent / Carer Communication

Date and time informed	
Method of communication	
Was information shared in writing? (Yes / No - if no, explain)	
If not informed, statutory reason	

Section J: Post-Incident Support and Reflection

Support provided to pupil	
Support provided to staff	
Learning points and next steps	

Section K: Leadership / Governance Review - Does this incident indicate emerging patterns or training needs?

Reviewed by	
Date	

Actions identified	
Trust Lead Informed	

**Communication template to Parents/Carers following RI Incident**

**Subject:** Follow-up Notification Regarding a Restrictive Intervention Involving [Child’s Name]

Dear [Parent/Carer’s Name],

I am writing to follow up on the conversation you had earlier today with a member of our staff regarding an incident involving [Child’s Name].

As discussed, during this incident a **Restrictive Intervention** was used. Under Department for Education guidance, schools are required to **formally notify parents in writing** whenever a significant incident of restrictive intervention occurs. This email therefore serves as the written record and confirmation of what was shared with you verbally at the time.

The details of the incident are set out below to ensure transparency and clarity:

**Summary of the Incident**

- **Date and time:**
- **Location:**
- **Reason for intervention:**
- **Strategies used to avoid restrictive intervention being used:**
- **Type of restrictive intervention used:**
- **Duration:**
- **Outcome and support provided following the incident:**

(Please note that any restrictive intervention is only ever used as a last resort, where necessary, to keep a child or others safe, and for the shortest possible time.)

This information has been **recorded in line with statutory requirements** and is held securely on the school’s safeguarding system. It is treated as **strictly confidential** and is only accessible to appropriate safeguarding and senior staff.

We want to reassure you that the school is committed to working **openly and collaboratively** with families. We recognise that incidents of this nature can be upsetting, and we place a strong emphasis on reflection, learning, and prevention.

We would very much welcome any further discussion with you about:

- what may have contributed to the incident
- how we can continue to support [Child’s Name] effectively
- what steps we can take together to **reduce the risk of a similar situation occurring again**

Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you would like to arrange a meeting or talk this through further. Your insights are an important part of ensuring the best possible support for your child.

Thank you for your continued cooperation and trust.