

# The Willows School Academy Trust



## Restrictive Interventions Policy

Reviewed: April 2026  
Next Review: April 2027

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## Statement of Intent

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At The Willows School Academy Trust, we are committed to maintaining the safety and wellbeing of all pupils and staff. We recognise that any restraint carries a risk of physical and psychological harm, and should be avoided where possible. This policy sets out our approach to the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, in line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance "*Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force in schools*" (effective 1 April 2026).

### Our Core Principles

- Prevention is paramount - We prioritise creating a calm, supportive environment that minimises the need for restrictive interventions
- Relationships matter - Positive relationships between staff and pupils are central to preventing and de-escalating challenging behaviour
- Individual needs - We recognise that all pupils have unique needs and require individualised responses
- Last resort - Restrictive interventions are only used when all other strategies have been exhausted and there is an immediate risk of harm
- Dignity and respect - When restrictive interventions are necessary, they are carried out in a way that maintains the dignity and respect of all involved
- Learning and improvement - We use every incident as an opportunity to learn, improve our practice, and reduce future need for restrictive interventions

### Our Commitment

We are committed to:

- Using the minimum force necessary for the shortest time possible
- Ensuring all interventions are necessary, proportionate and in the pupil's best interests
- Recording and reporting all significant incidents in accordance with statutory requirements
- Continuously improving our practice through analysis, reflection and training
- Working in partnership with pupils, parents/carers and external professionals
- Monitoring data to identify and address any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions

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## Legal Framework

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This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to:

### Primary Legislation

- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Section 93)
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

### Statutory Guidance

- DfE "*Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force in schools*" (December 2025, effective 1 April 2026)
- DfE "*Keeping Children Safe in Education*" (Current Version)
- DfE "*Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff*" (September 2024)
- DfE "*Working Together to Safeguard Children*" (December 2023)
- DfE "*Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years*" (2015)
- DfE "*Searching, screening and confiscation: advice for schools*" (September 2024)
- DfE "*Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England*" (August 2024)

### Non-Statutory Guidance

- British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD) Code of Practice for the Use and Reduction of Restrictive Interventions

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## Links to Other Policies

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This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Behaviour Policy - sets out the school's whole-school approach to behaviour management
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy - includes procedures for allegations against staff
- Health and Safety Policy - includes procedures for recording and reporting injuries
- First Aid Policy - sets out procedures for administering first aid
- SEND Policy - sets out the school's approach to supporting pupils with SEND
- Equality and Diversity Policy - sets out the school's commitment to equality
- Complaints Policy - sets out procedures for handling complaints
- Data Protection Policy - sets out how the school handles personal data
- Staff Code of Conduct - sets out expectations for staff behaviour
- Whistleblowing Policy - sets out procedures for raising concerns

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## Definitions

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For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

### **Restrictive Interventions**

Restrictive interventions are used to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body or part of the body. Restrictive interventions include physical and non-physical actions aimed at restraining pupils in different ways. For example, putting a pupil in a room and not allowing them to leave is a restrictive intervention.

### **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.

### **Significant Incident**

A significant incident is any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between a member of staff and a pupil.

### **Appropriate Contact**

Appropriate contact might include a handshake to congratulate a pupil, giving first aid, or demonstrating how to use a musical instrument.

Examples of appropriate contact include:

- Comforting a distressed pupil
- Guiding a pupil by the hand or shoulder (where the pupil is compliant)
- Demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons
- Providing personal care (where appropriate and agreed)
- Administering first aid

### **Restraint**

Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. It involves the use of force to restrict a pupil's movement against their will.

### **De-escalation**

De-escalation refers to the range of verbal and non-verbal strategies used to reduce tension and prevent a situation from escalating to the point where a restrictive intervention becomes necessary.

### **Behaviour Support Plan**

A Behaviour Support Plan is an individualised plan that sets out prevention strategies, de-escalation techniques, and (where appropriate) the types of restrictive interventions that may be used for a specific pupil.

### **The Governing Board is responsible for:**

- Approving this policy and ensuring it complies with statutory requirements
- Regularly reviewing and interrogating data on restrictive interventions to ensure the school identifies areas for improvement, training needs, patterns of behaviour, and any disproportionate use with vulnerable pupils
- Ensuring the school has appropriate procedures for recording and reporting restrictive interventions
- Monitoring the effectiveness of this policy
- Ensuring staff receive appropriate training
- Holding the headteacher to account for implementation of this policy
- Ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998

### **The headteacher is responsible for:**

- The overall implementation and management of this policy
- Ensuring all staff understand this policy and their responsibilities
- Ensuring staff receive appropriate training in behaviour management, de-escalation and (where appropriate) the safe use of restrictive interventions
- Ensuring staff who are likely to need to use restrictive interventions are adequately trained to do so safely and lawfully, and trained in strategies to prevent the need to use reasonable force
- Ensuring Individual Risk Assessments and Behaviour Support Plans are in place for pupils who may require restrictive interventions
- Monitoring the use of restrictive interventions across the school
- Analysing data and identifying trends, patterns and areas for improvement
- Reporting to governors on the use of restrictive interventions
- Ensuring parents/carers are informed when restrictive interventions are used
- Investigating any complaints or allegations regarding the use of restrictive interventions
- Creating a culture of continuous improvement

### **The SLT is responsible for:**

- Supporting the headteacher in implementing this policy
- Providing visible leadership and modelling positive behaviour management
- Supporting staff in managing challenging behaviour
- Reviewing all restrictive intervention reports
- Conducting post-incident debriefs
- Identifying training needs
- Reviewing and updating Individual Risk Assessments and Behaviour Support Plans
- Analysing data and identifying patterns
- Ensuring statutory recording and reporting requirements are met

### **The DSL is responsible for:**

- Ensuring restrictive interventions are considered within the safeguarding framework
- Being notified of all restrictive intervention incidents
- Identifying any safeguarding concerns arising from incidents
- Liaising with external agencies where appropriate
- Ensuring appropriate support is provided to pupils and staff following incidents

### **The SENCO is responsible for:**

- Working with pupils, parents/carers and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies and behaviour plans that set out prevention strategies and the types of physical interventions that will be used
- Ensuring pupils with SEND have appropriate support to reduce the need for restrictive interventions
- Advising staff on strategies for pupils with SEND
- Reviewing the use of restrictive interventions with pupils with SEND to identify any disproportionate use
- Ensuring Individual Risk Assessments are in place for pupils with SEND who may require restrictive interventions

### **All staff members are responsible for:**

- Understanding and implementing this policy

- Creating a calm, positive environment that minimises the need for restrictive interventions
- Using de-escalation strategies as a first response to challenging behaviour
- Before using a restrictive intervention, considering if it's necessary, if it's proportionate, and the pupil's welfare
- Only using restrictive interventions as a last resort when there is an immediate risk of harm
- Using the minimum force necessary for the shortest time possible
- Following pupils' Individual Risk Assessments and Behaviour Support Plans
- Recording all significant incidents in writing as soon as possible after the event, endeavouring to do this no later than the same day
- Participating in post-incident debriefs
- Engaging in training and continuous professional development
- Seeking support when needed

**Pupils are expected to:**

- Follow the school rules
- Treat others with respect
- Seek help from staff when they are struggling
- Engage with their Behaviour Support Plan (where applicable)
- Participate in post-incident conversations (where appropriate)

**Parents/carers are expected to:**

- Work in partnership with the school
- Share information about their child's needs, triggers and effective strategies
- Engage in discussions about Behaviour Support Plans and Risk Assessments
- Attend meetings following incidents (where requested)
- Support the school's approach to behaviour management

Our Approach: Prevention First

At The Willows School Academy Trust, we treat restrictive interventions as a last resort. We implement measures for prevention and de-escalation to help us reduce the need to use restrictive interventions.

**Whole-School Prevention Strategies**

We create a calm, supportive environment through:

**1. Physical Environment**

- Well-organised, clutter-free classrooms with designated quiet zones
- Clear signage and visual supports
- Sensory-friendly spaces
- Identified 'safe spaces' where pupils can go to calm down
- Deploying staff in key areas identified as 'hotspots' for behaviour issues
- Making sure enough staff are present and on duty at key times when behaviour issues are more likely to happen

**2. Positive Relationships**

- Prioritising positive relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff
- Greeting pupils positively at the start of each day/lesson
- Regular check-ins with pupils
- Restorative approaches to conflict resolution
- Ensuring pupils with specific behavioural needs have a 'trusted adult' to act as a regular point of contact

**3. Clear Expectations and Routines**

- Three simple, clear school rules:
  1. We follow instructions
  2. We are kind, polite and respectful to everyone
  3. We keep hands, feet and other objects to ourselves
- Consistent routines and structures
- Visual timetables and schedules
- Clear communication of expectations

**4. Positive Behaviour Support**

- Emphasis on praise and positive reinforcement
- Behaviour Target System with daily points
- Weekly certificates and rewards

- School shop
- Focus on teaching behaviour and emotional regulation as skills

#### 5. *Common Language*

- Agreed shared, whole-school language for de-escalation, so messaging is consistent
- All staff use the same phrases and approaches
- Consistent responses to behaviour across the school

#### 6. *Staff Training and Support*

- Training staff to pick up on early signs of distress
- Regular behaviour management training
- Team Teach training for appropriate staff
- De-escalation techniques training
- Trauma-informed practice training
- Regular supervision and support

### **Individual Prevention Strategies**

For pupils who may require additional support, we implement:

#### 1. *Individual Risk Assessments*

- Where a pupil's behaviour means that it's more likely that staff will need to use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions, we have a risk assessment in place
- Identification of triggers and early warning signs
- Proactive strategies to prevent escalation
- Regular review and update

#### 2. *Behaviour Support Plans*

- Working with the pupil, their parents/carers, and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies and a behaviour plan that sets out prevention strategies and the types of physical interventions that will be used
- Personalised de-escalation techniques
- Agreed responses to specific behaviours
- Clear communication with all staff
- Regular review with pupil, parents/carers and relevant professionals

#### 3. *Trusted Adults*

- Pupils with a behaviour plan or specific behavioural needs have a 'trusted adult' to act as a regular point of contact, with at least 2 'trusted adults' so there's always someone available
- Regular check-ins
- Safe space to raise concerns
- Early intervention when signs of distress are identified

#### 4. *Personalised Support*

- Sensory breaks
- Movement breaks
- Access to quiet spaces
- Adapted curriculum where appropriate
- Additional adult support where needed
- External agency involvement where appropriate

### **De-escalation Strategies**

All staff are trained in de-escalation techniques and should use these as a first response to challenging behaviour. De-escalation strategies include:

#### **Verbal Strategies:**

- Using a warm, calm tone of voice
- Speaking slowly and clearly
- Using simple language
- Giving clear, specific instructions
- Offering choices
- Acknowledging feelings: "I can see you're feeling frustrated"
- Reassuring: "I'm here to help you"
- Reminding of consequences calmly
- Using the pupil's name positively

#### **Non-Verbal Strategies:**

- Maintaining a calm facial expression

- Using open, non-threatening body language
- Respecting personal space
- Avoiding direct eye contact if this escalates the situation
- Using gestures to support communication
- Positioning yourself at an angle rather than face-to-face

**Environmental Strategies:**

- Reducing sensory stimulation (dimming lights, reducing noise)
- Removing audience (other pupils)
- Offering a change of environment
- Providing access to sensory tools or calming strategies
- Allowing time and space

**Relationship-Based Strategies:**

- Calling for a trusted adult
- Using humour appropriately
- Referring to positive past experiences
- Reminding the pupil of their strengths
- Offering support: "How can I help you?"

**Practical Strategies:**

- Giving processing time
- Offering a break or time out
- Redirecting to a different activity
- Offering a drink of water
- Using distraction techniques
- Planned ignoring of attention-seeking behaviour (tactical ignoring)

## Staff Training

All staff receive training in:

- This policy and their responsibilities
- Behaviour management strategies
- De-escalation techniques
- Trauma-informed practice
- Understanding behaviour as communication
- Recognising early signs of distress
- Creating a calm environment
- Building positive relationships
- The school's common language and approaches
- Team Teach - a recognised training programme in positive behaviour management and safe, approved physical intervention techniques
- When and how to use restrictive interventions safely and lawfully
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This training is provided:

- During induction for new staff
- As part of annual safeguarding training
- Through regular updates and refreshers

## When Restrictive Interventions May Be Used

All members of school staff can use a restrictive intervention – including reasonable force – 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

### Examples of Situations

Restrictive interventions may be used in situations such as:

#### Preventing harm to self or others:

- A pupil is attacking another pupil or staff member
- Pupils are fighting and refuse to separate
- A pupil is attempting to self-harm
- A pupil is running towards a dangerous area (e.g., a road, a height)

#### Preventing damage to property:

- A pupil is causing or about to cause significant damage to property that could result in harm or significant cost
- A pupil is throwing objects that could cause injury or damage

#### Preventing disorder or criminal offence:

- A pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson or event
- A pupil is refusing to leave an area when instructed and their presence poses a risk

### Important Principles

- Restrictive interventions are always a last resort
- Staff must first attempt to use de-escalation strategies
- Staff must follow the pupil's Individual Risk Assessment and Behaviour Support Plan (where one exists)
- The decision to use a restrictive intervention must be made in the moment based on professional judgement
- The intervention must be necessary, proportionate and in the pupil's best interests

## Types of Restrictive Interventions

We recognise three levels of physical interaction with pupils:

### Level 1: Appropriate Physical Contact

This is normal, caring interaction and is not considered a restrictive intervention.

Examples include:

- A handshake to congratulate a pupil
- Giving first aid
- Demonstrating how to use a musical instrument
- Comforting a distressed pupil
- Guiding a pupil by the hand or shoulder (where the pupil is compliant)
- Demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons
- Providing personal care (where appropriate and agreed)

### Level 2: Physical Intervention (Non-Restrictive)

This may be used to divert a pupil from a destructive or disruptive action, where the pupil is compliant.

Examples include:

- Guiding or leading a pupil by the arm or shoulder where the pupil is compliant
- Blocking a pupil's path
- Holding a pupil's hand to guide them to safety
- Standing between pupils

**Key principle:** The level of compliance from the pupil determines whether the interaction is an intervention or a restrictive intervention.

### Level 3: Restrictive Physical Intervention

This involves the use of force when there is an immediate risk to pupils, staff or property, and the pupil is not compliant. 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.

Examples of restrictive physical interventions include:

- Holding a pupil's arms or shoulders to prevent them from hitting
- Using approved Team Teach holds to prevent a pupil from harming themselves or others
- Guiding a pupil to a safe space using physical contact (where the pupil is resistant)
- Breaking up a fight by physically separating pupils

Before using a restrictive intervention with a pupil, staff should consider:

**1. Is it Necessary?**

- Are there alternative ways to manage the situation and achieve the desired outcome?
- Is the intervention likely to reduce risks or might it escalate the situation further?
- Have all de-escalation strategies been attempted?
- Is there an immediate risk of harm if no action is taken?

**2. Is it Proportionate?**

- Am I using the least restrictive intervention for the least amount of time?
- Have I considered the individual circumstances of the pupil such as their age, size and any medical conditions?
- Is the level of force proportionate to the risk of harm?

**3. What is the Impact on the Pupil's Welfare?**

- What impact might the use of force or restrictive interventions have on this pupil?
- Have I considered whether this pupil has experienced adverse life events?
- Am I maintaining respect for their dignity?

**Decision-Making Process**

**STEP 1: ASSESS THE SITUATION**

- What is happening?
- What is the immediate risk?
- Who is at risk?
- What is the level of risk?

**STEP 2: CONSIDER THE PUPIL**

- Does this pupil have a Behaviour Support Plan or Risk Assessment?
- What are their known triggers?
- What de-escalation strategies work for this pupil?
- Do they have any medical conditions or SEND that I need to consider?
- What is their age, size and strength?

**STEP 3: ATTEMPT DE-ESCALATION**

- Use the pupil's personalised de-escalation strategies (if known)
- Use whole-school de-escalation strategies
- Give the pupil time to process and respond
- Offer choices and alternatives
- Call for support from a trusted adult or colleague

**STEP 4: MAKE THE DECISION**

- Is there still an immediate risk of harm?
- Have all other strategies been exhausted?
- Is a restrictive intervention necessary, proportionate and in the pupil's best interests?

**STEP 5: IF YES, ACT**

- Give a clear verbal warning (where safe to do so)
- Use the minimum force necessary
- Use approved techniques only
- Release as soon as it is safe to do so
- Monitor the pupil's wellbeing throughout

**STEP 6: IF NO, CONTINUE DE-ESCALATION**

- Maintain calm presence
- Continue to use de-escalation strategies
- Seek additional support
- Ensure safety of all

When reasonable force is used, staff must ensure:

- Use the least amount of force that's necessary, for no longer than is necessary
- Release your hold on the pupil as soon as it is safe to do so
- The force used is proportionate to the circumstances and the risk
- The pupil's dignity is maintained as far as possible
- Only approved techniques (Team Teach) are used
- The pupil is monitored throughout for signs of distress or injury

### Approved Techniques

Staff may only use techniques in which they have been trained (Team Teach). These include:

- **Caring C's** - guiding a pupil using gentle contact on the shoulders
- **Single Elbow** - guiding a pupil by holding their elbow
- **Double Elbow** - guiding a pupil by holding both elbows
- **Figure of Four** - a seated wrap hold
- **Wrap** - standing wrap hold
- **Small Child Hold** - for younger/smaller pupils

### All techniques must:

- Be used for the minimum time necessary
- Allow the pupil to breathe freely
- Not restrict the pupil's airway, breathing or circulation
- Not apply pressure to joints, neck, chest, abdomen or back
- Allow for the pupil to be released quickly if they show signs of distress

During a Restrictive Physical Intervention

Staff should:

#### 1. Communicate clearly

- Explain what is happening: "I am holding you to keep you safe"
- Reassure the pupil: "I will let go as soon as you are calm and safe"
- Continue to use de-escalation language
- Offer choices: "When you are calm, I can let go"

#### 2. Monitor the pupil

- Watch for signs of distress or injury
- Check the pupil can breathe freely
- Monitor skin colour and temperature
- Listen to what the pupil is saying
- If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, release or re-position them as quickly as possible

#### 3. Work as a team

- Where possible, have a second staff member present
- Communicate with colleagues
- Take turns if the intervention is prolonged
- Support each other

#### 4. Release as soon as safe

- Gradually reduce the level of force as the pupil calms
- Release fully as soon as it is safe to do so
- Do not release suddenly
- Maintain a calm presence after release

### After Using Reasonable Force

Immediately after using reasonable force, staff should:

1. Ensure the pupil is safe and calm
2. Check for any injuries (pupil and staff)

3. Provide reassurance and support
4. Allow the pupil time and space to recover
5. Inform a member of SLT immediately
6. Record incident

### Searching Pupils

The Headteacher and other members of staff authorised by the headteacher have the statutory power to search pupils and/or their possessions if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil has a prohibited item.

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### Practices not acceptable at The Willows

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It is illegal to:

- Use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment

Staff must not:

- Restrain a pupil in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation
  
- Cover the pupil's nose or mouth
- Apply pressure to the neck or abdomen
- Apply pressure to joints
- Use pain to gain compliance
- Hold a pupil face down (prone restraint) except in extreme circumstances and for the absolute minimum time
- Use any technique not taught in approved training
- Use restrictive interventions as a punishment or threat
- Use restrictive interventions to force compliance with instructions (unless there is an immediate risk of harm)
- Involve other pupils in restraining a pupil
- Use restrictive interventions when angry or frustrated

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### Recording

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From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026, the school has a legal duty to record each significant incident in which a member of staff uses any of the following on a pupil: reasonable force or restraint (with or without direct physical contact).

#### Recording System

Current System: All restrictive interventions must be recorded on **CPOMS** (Child Protection Online Management System).

From Summer 2026: All restrictive interventions will be recorded on the **Arbor** platform.

#### Recording Injuries

Any injuries must also be recorded using the process set out in the Health and Safety Policy.

#### Confidentiality

All records are kept confidentially and stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

Access to records is restricted to:

- The headteacher and SLT
- The DSL
- Governors (for monitoring purposes)
- External agencies (where appropriate and with consent)

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## Reporting

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The school must report incidents to parents/carers/guardians as soon as possible, endeavouring to do this no later than the same day. This is a statutory requirement, even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances has been agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

### Exceptions

The school does not have to report an incident to parents if:

- Telling the parents would likely result in serious harm to the pupil

In these cases, the school must report it instead to the local authority (LA) where the pupil lives.

### Meeting with Parents

Following an incident, the school will invite parents into school to discuss it as part of the debriefing process. This does not need to be on the same day, but will be arranged as soon as possible after the incident.

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## Complaints

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Formal complaints about restrictive interventions will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy.

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## Policy Review

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This policy will be reviewed annually by the headteacher, SLT and governing board.

**Signed:** Malcolm Shaw  
Headteacher

Bal Grant  
Chair of Governors

