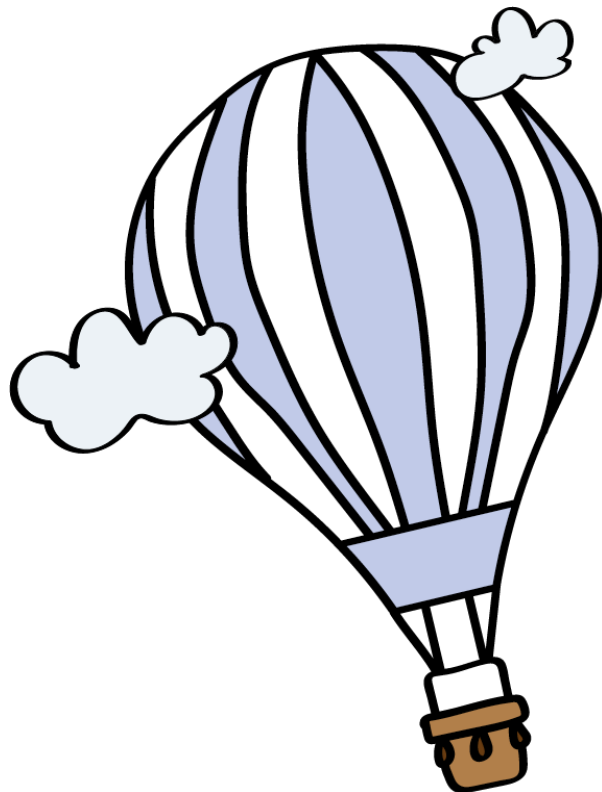




Use of Reasonable Force and Other Restrictive Interventions Policy





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1. Introduction

This policy sets out Storyybrook's approach to the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, in accordance with the latest Department for Education (DfE) guidance.

The school is committed to safeguarding the safety, dignity and wellbeing of all pupils and staff. Restrictive interventions are recognised as high-risk and potentially distressing and will only ever be used as a last resort, when all preventative and de-escalation strategies have been exhausted or are clearly inadequate, and only where the use of reasonable force or another restrictive intervention is lawful, necessary and proportionate in the circumstances.

Storyybrook takes a clear and consistent stance on the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force. Restrictive interventions will only ever be used when all other preventative and de-escalation strategies have been exhausted or are clearly inadequate in the circumstances, and only to prevent an immediate risk of harm to the pupil, other pupils, staff, or significant damage to property. Any intervention must be reasonable, proportionate, necessary, time-limited, and in the best interests of the child. Storyybrook does not permit the use of pain-inducing techniques, prone restraint, or any method that restricts breathing, circulation, or places a pupil at unacceptable risk. Staff are expected to prioritise trauma-informed practice, early intervention and positive relationships, and all use of restrictive interventions must comply with this policy, DfE guidance, and statutory recording and reporting duties.

Storyybrook's approach prioritises:

- prevention
- early support
- de-escalation
- trauma-informed and relationship-based practice

Restrictive interventions will only be used when it is in the best interests of the pupil and wider school community.

This policy has been developed with reference to the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, including sections 93 and 93A
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Equality Act 2010
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004
- Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools - Department for Education
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation - Department for Education





The Headteacher (DSL) will ensure that staff are familiar with and correctly apply this policy. This policy will be reviewed annually.

All staff are required to understand and adhere to this policy. Failure to follow the expectations, procedures and statutory duties set out in this policy may be considered a breach of professional conduct and could result in management or disciplinary action in line with Storyybrook's Staff Code of Conduct Policy.

2. Definitions

For clarity, this policy uses the following terms:

- **Restrictive intervention:** an umbrella term describing physical and non-physical actions used to prevent, restrict, or subdue a pupil's movement/liberty in order to reduce an immediate risk of harm.
- **Reasonable force:** a statutory term which includes physical restrictive interventions. "Reasonable" means no more force than necessary for the least amount of time, based on the circumstances.
- **Restraint:** a non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises or limits movement, which may occur with or without direct physical contact (depending on context and method).
- **Seclusion:** a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined away from others and prevented from leaving (by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave).
- **Significant incident:** any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff, as described in section 4 of this policy. This includes where physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention (see below).

3. Aims

This policy aims to:

- ensure all staff understand when and how restrictive interventions may be used
- ensure compliance with statutory recording and reporting duties
- protect the rights, dignity and welfare of pupils and staff
- reduce the need for restrictive interventions through prevention and de-escalation
- promote a safe, inclusive and supportive learning environment
- provide clarity for pupils, parents/carers, staff and governors

4. Appropriate physical contact

Storyybrook do not operate a "no contact" policy, particularly as we are an SEMH specialist setting. There are circumstances when physical contact is appropriate and does not constitute a restrictive intervention.

Examples include:

- providing first aid
- guiding or escorting pupils safely
- comforting a distressed pupil
- congratulations or praise (e.g., handshake)





Any physical contact must be consistent with safeguarding expectations, the pupil's needs and preferences, and professional judgement.

5. De-escalation and prevention techniques

Prevention is Storyybrook's primary and preferred approach to behaviour support and the management of risk. We place a clear emphasis on preventing escalation wherever possible, ensuring that early support, proactive strategies, and trauma-informed, relationship-based practice are consistently used before any form of restrictive intervention is considered. Staff must always prioritise approaches that reduce the likelihood of distress or crisis, recognising that restrictive interventions carry inherent risk and should only be used when all preventative options have been exhausted or are clearly insufficient in an immediate situation.

Strategies implemented at school level include, but not limited to:

- 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 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

Individual pupil strategies include but not limited to:

- working closely with parents/carers to support individual pupils
- strategies to support individual pupils based on their identified needs, including the development of behaviour support plans. Where a pupil has a disability, schools have a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010 to support pupils with reasonable adjustments, making sure they can benefit from what the school offers
- giving pupils time, space and strategies to calm down before their behaviour escalates

Storyybrook recognises that pupils with SEND may be disproportionately affected by restrictive interventions. As an SEMH setting, all of our pupils fall under this category and therefore must be protected from unnecessary or excessive use of restrictive interventions.

We will:

- identify triggers and unmet needs
- make reasonable adjustments
- co-produce behaviour support plans with parents/carers and other professionals where appropriate
- review plans following incidents
- implement personalised risk assessments where appropriate
- prioritise inclusive, preventative strategies

6. Use of Restrictive Interventions (including reasonable force)





Who may use reasonable force?

All members of staff have the legal power to use reasonable force where the statutory conditions are met. In an unforeseen or emergency situation, any member of staff may use reasonable force where this is necessary and there is no safer alternative available.

Where the need for restrictive physical intervention is foreseeable or forms part of an individual risk assessment or Positive Handling Plan, Storyybrook will ensure that staff expected to implement the planned intervention have received appropriate training relevant to the pupil's needs and the interventions identified.

Staff must not use physical techniques for which they have not been appropriately trained, except where an unforeseen emergency requires immediate reasonable action to prevent harm and there is no safer alternative.

The Headteacher will determine the training required by staff to implement this policy safely and effectively, taking account of their roles and responsibilities and the needs of pupils. Training will include prevention and de-escalation and, for identified staff, appropriate training in the safe use of restrictive physical interventions.

When to use reasonable force

When determining the use of reasonable force, Storyybrook staff must use professional judgement, the principles of dynamic risk assessments (unforeseeable risk in fast changing situations), and formal risk assessments (identified foreseeable risks with control measures to mitigate the risk as much as possible). Staff must also determine whether the information below is relevant and accurate.

Where foreseeable risks have been identified, a formal risk assessment must be completed and kept up to date, and the findings must be reflected in the pupil's Positive Handling Plan so that any planned use of reasonable force is clearly documented and reviewed regularly.

Is it Necessary?

- Are there less restrictive options available?
- Would intervention reduce risk or escalate the situation?

Is it Proportionate?

- Staff should use the least restrictive approach for the shortest time required
- If the intervention is escalating the situation, staff should use an alternative approach
- Staff should consider the pupil's welfare, age, size, SEND/vulnerabilities, medical needs, trauma history, communication needs, and the impact of the intervention
- Staff should maintain respect and privacy wherever possible

Restrictive interventions must **never** be used as punishment. None of the techniques used are: pain compliant, restricts breathing or circulation, involves pressure on the neck, chest, abdomen or joints.





Storyybrook does not currently use ground holds as part of its planned restrictive intervention practice. Prone (face-down) restraint is prohibited.

If a pupil's assessed needs were exceptionally to indicate that an alternative ground-based intervention may need to be considered, this would not be introduced unless an individual risk assessment had been completed, appropriate professional advice had been considered, staff had received appropriate training and the Headteacher and Proprietor were satisfied that the proposed approach was lawful, necessary and proportionate. No intervention may compromise a pupil's airway, breathing or circulation.

Use of reasonable force to search pupils

The Headteacher and members of staff authorised by the Headteacher may search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil is in possession of a prohibited item, in accordance with the school's Searching, Screening and Confiscation procedures and current DfE guidance.

Staff should seek the pupil's cooperation before conducting a search wherever possible.

Where a pupil does not cooperate, reasonable force may only be used to conduct a search where this is permitted by law. Reasonable force may be used to search for items prohibited by law where the statutory conditions are met. Reasonable force must not be used solely to search for an item that is banned under the school's own rules but is not an item for which legislation permits the use of force.

Any force used must be reasonable, necessary and proportionate in the circumstances. Staff must consider the pupil's individual circumstances, including their age, SEND, SEMH needs, communication needs and any known vulnerabilities.

Searches and any resulting confiscation will be carried out in accordance with current DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance, the school's Behaviour and Relationships Policy and safeguarding procedures. Where a search gives rise to a safeguarding concern, staff must inform the DSL without delay.

The DfE confirms that schools should first seek cooperation, and its current restrictive-intervention guidance specifically distinguishes searches for legally prohibited items from items banned only by school rules.

7. Seclusion

Storyybrook does not permit seclusion to be used as a planned behaviour management strategy under any circumstances. Seclusion may only ever occur as an immediate, dynamic risk response in situations where a pupil's behaviour presents an imminent risk of serious harm to others and no safer alternative is available. Any use of seclusion must be continuously supervised, time limited, and ended as soon as the risk has reduced. At no point should seclusion be used as punishment, consequence, or a predetermined response within a behaviour plan. All incidents of seclusion must be recorded, reported, and immediately reviewed in line with statutory requirements and Storyybrook procedures.

Seclusion must:

- never be used as a disciplinary response





- take place in a space that is safe and does not feel threatening or punitive
- involve continuous supervision
- end as soon as the immediate risk is reduced and the pupil can safely leave
- be recorded and reported in line with statutory procedures

Any such incident will be subject to immediate review (see monitoring section).

Seclusion is distinct from a pupil voluntarily choosing to spend time in a quiet, sensory or regulation space, or being supported to move to another area where they remain free to leave. Such arrangements do not constitute seclusion where the pupil is able to leave freely and does not believe that they will be prevented or punished for doing so.

Staff must remain alert to the fact that an arrangement may become seclusion if a pupil is prevented from leaving, including through physical obstruction or blocking, or is made to believe that they will be punished if they attempt to leave. Where this occurs, the incident must be treated, recorded and reported as seclusion in accordance with this policy.

8. Recording and Reporting

All significant incidents involving the use of force must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable after the incident, in accordance with section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Every incident in which a member of staff secludes, restrains or immobilises a pupil must also be recorded in writing as soon as practicable after the incident, in accordance with the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025.

Where an incident of seclusion, restraint or immobilisation also constitutes a significant incident involving the use of force, a separate duplicate record is not required.

Storybrook will record incidents using CPOMS as soon as practicable after the incident and will endeavour to complete the record on the same day.

A member of SLT must be informed immediately after (if not appropriate to during the incident that is taking place); in the first instance, this should be the Headteacher (DSL).

Storybrook will ensure records are in line with:

- the DfE use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions guidance
- the school will also record and report incidents of seclusion and restraint in line with statutory duties under the Schools Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025

The written record will include, as a minimum:

- the pupil's name
- the names of the members of staff involved
- the pupil's relevant circumstances, including any identified SEND, disability, medical, communication or other vulnerability relevant to the incident
- the date, time, location and approximate duration of the incident





- the circumstances immediately before the incident, including what was happening and any relevant triggers or risks identified
- the preventative and de-escalation strategies attempted, where applicable
- the nature of the restrictive intervention used, including whether this involved reasonable force, restraint, immobilisation or seclusion
- why the intervention was considered necessary and proportionate
- where force was used, the type and degree of force used
- what happened during and immediately after the intervention
- any injury or physical harm sustained by the pupil or others and any medical or first aid support provided
- the pupil's response and any post-incident support provided
- any further safeguarding, behaviour, risk assessment or support-plan actions required.

9. Informing Parents/Carers

It is a non-negotiable Storyybrook requirement that parents/carers are informed of any significant incident involving the use of force, or an incident of restraint, immobilisation or seclusion, unless doing so would place the pupil at risk of significant harm. Informing parents/ carers is an essential safeguarding expectation and forms part of the school's commitment to transparency, partnership with families, and effective post-incident support.

Parents/carers must be informed in writing as soon as practicable following a significant incident involving the use of force, or an incident of restraint or seclusion. Storyybrook will endeavour to provide this information on the same day. Where appropriate, the school will also speak with parents/carers and offer a follow-up discussion.

The written report will include, as a minimum:

- the time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- a brief account of why the intervention was considered necessary
- the type of force, restraint, immobilisation or seclusion used and, where force was used, the degree of force applied
- details of any physical injuries sustained, where applicable

Records must be factual, objective and sufficiently detailed to explain the circumstances of the incident, why the intervention was considered necessary, what action was taken and what happened afterwards.

Where it appears that providing information about an incident to a parent would be likely to result in significant harm to the pupil, the information will not be provided to that parent. Where there is no parent to whom the information can be provided without being likely to result in significant harm to the pupil, the school will provide the information to the local authority in whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident, in accordance with the applicable statutory requirements.

The decision and reasons will be recorded. The DSL will also consider whether any separate safeguarding action or referral to children's social care is required.





Any decision not to report an incident to a parent will be recorded, together with the reasons for the decision, and the DSL will consider whether any further safeguarding action or referral to children's social care is required.

The requirement to record and report an incident applies even where the possible use of restrictive intervention has previously been discussed or agreed with parents/carers as part of a pupil's Positive Handling Plan, Behaviour Support Plan or individual risk assessment.

10. Post Incident Support

Following an incident involving a restrictive intervention, Storybrook will:

- check the pupil and any other person involved for injury and arrange appropriate first aid or medical assessment where required
- provide appropriate emotional support to the pupil, staff and any witnesses affected by the incident
- give the pupil an opportunity, when they are ready and in a manner appropriate to their age, understanding, SEND and communication needs, to communicate their perspective on what happened
- provide staff involved with an opportunity to reflect on the incident
- consider whether any safeguarding action or referral is required
- review and update the pupil's risk assessment, Behaviour Support Plan or Positive Handling Plan where necessary
- consider whether reasonable adjustments, environmental changes or additional support could reduce the likelihood of restrictive intervention being required in future
- support appropriate relational repair following the incident.

Post-incident review will consider what happened before, during and after the incident, including the pupil's perspective, identified triggers, the effectiveness of preventative and de-escalation strategies, whether the intervention was necessary and proportionate, and whether anything could be changed to reduce the likelihood of restrictive intervention being required in future.

Post-incident support and reflection will take place when the pupil is sufficiently regulated and able to participate meaningfully. A pupil will not be required to discuss or repeatedly recount the incident while distressed or dysregulated.

11. Individual Risk Assessment and Positive Handling Plans

Where foreseeable risks are identified and a pupil is considered more likely to require restrictive intervention, Storybrook will develop appropriate individual planning and support measures, including an individual risk assessment and Positive Handling Plan.

These documents will include:

- identified risks, triggers and early warning signs
- preventative strategies and reasonable adjustments
- regulation and de-escalation strategies
- communication needs and approaches





- agreed responses where risk escalates, including any foreseeable circumstances in which restrictive intervention may need to be considered
- any relevant medical, SEND, safeguarding or other vulnerability factors
- strategies for reducing the likelihood of restrictive intervention being required.

Parents/carers and the pupil will be involved in the development and review of individual plans wherever appropriate, taking account of the pupil's age, understanding, SEND and communication needs. Relevant professionals will be involved where appropriate.

The existence of a Positive Handling Plan or risk assessment does not provide automatic or advance authorisation to use restrictive intervention. Staff must assess the circumstances at the time of each incident and any intervention must remain lawful, necessary, reasonable and proportionate, using the least restrictive intervention for the shortest time necessary.

Plans will be reviewed regularly, as a minimum every six weeks, and following any significant incident or other change in the pupil's needs, risks or circumstances.

12. Monitoring

A member of SLT, namely the Headteacher (DSL), will be notified of any significant incident, restraint and seclusion that has taken place on the same day as the incident.

An Immediate review of any incident involving a ground hold, seclusion, injury and/or safeguarding concern must take place within 24 hours of the incident to ensure timely oversight, safeguarding assurance and appropriate follow-up. Any such incident will also be reported to the governing body and proprietor. A fortnightly review of recorded incidents will take place by the Headteacher and one other member of staff to reflect on whether this could have been avoided, and if this was proportionate, necessary, and reasonable.

The Headteacher will ensure the school follows all statutory and non-statutory procedures in line with DfE guidance.

The Headteacher and one other member of staff (usually the Deputy Headteacher, DDSL), will review and scrutinise data every 6 weeks relating to the use of force in order to:

- evaluate the effectiveness of behaviour and restraint practices, particularly where restrictive interventions are used repeatedly or over extended periods without evidence of improvement and ensure that less restrictive approaches are prioritised.
- identify professional development and training needs for staff, ensuring they are confident in de-escalation, positive behaviour support, and the lawful use of reasonable force.
- analyse patterns, triggers, and frequency of incidents involving individual pupils, to assess whether existing support plans are effective and to inform the development or revision of Behaviour Support Plans, Positive Handling Plans, or risk assessments, in collaboration with parents/carers where appropriate.
- monitor for disproportionate use of restrictive interventions, particularly in relation to pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), protected characteristics, or other identified vulnerabilities, in line with equality duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- monitor the frequency, duration and nature of restrictive interventions, including





repeated use involving individual pupils, and consider whether further preventative action, reasonable adjustments or changes to provision are required to reduce reliance on restrictive interventions

The Headteacher will provide reasonable force, seclusion and restraint data to the governing body every term. The governing body will review the data thoroughly, interrogate patterns, impact of interventions, challenge disproportionality, and safeguarding compliance.

Where appropriate, the Headteacher may seek additional scrutiny or professional challenge from the Proprietor, another suitably experienced education professional or the relevant local authority.

Where the Headteacher identifies any concerns, this should be raised with the governing body and proprietor immediately.

Restrictive intervention data will be monitored at the intervals set out above to identify patterns, scrutinise individual and cumulative use, identify any disproportionate use, reduce reliance on restrictive interventions and ensure that practice remains lawful, necessary, proportionate and consistent with safeguarding and equality duties.

The Proprietor will ensure that appropriate procedures are in place for recording and reporting significant incidents involving the use of force and incidents of seclusion, restraint or immobilisation, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that these procedures are complied with.





Appendix 1 Procedure Overview

This flowchart supports school staff in making safe, lawful, and proportionate decisions when considering physical intervention. It integrates key DfE principles: prevention, de-escalation, and ensuring any use of force is reasonable, proportionate, necessary, and in the best interests of the pupil.

1. Prevention

- Anticipate potential triggers and risk factors.
- Create a calm, structured environment.
- Use proactive strategies such as positive behaviour support, adjustments, and planned interventions.
- Promote emotional regulation and consistent relationships.

2. De-escalation

- Use verbal and non-verbal calming strategies (tone, space, reassurance).
- Follow the pupil's Positive Handling or Behaviour Support Plan.
- Offer choices, distraction, or time-out opportunities.
- Seek support from other staff if necessary.

3. Is Physical Intervention Required?

Consider:

- What is the risk of doing something compared with doing nothing?
- Is intervention necessary to prevent injury to the pupil or another person?
- Is intervention necessary to prevent damage to property?
- Is intervention otherwise permitted within the statutory reasonable-force framework?
- Is there a safer, less restrictive way of managing the situation?
- If NO → Continue de-escalation and monitoring
- If YES → Proceed to step 4.

4. Reasonable, Proportionate, and Necessary

Before intervening, ensure the response meets all three criteria:

- **Reasonable:** Do only what a calm, trained adult would judge safe and appropriate.
- **Proportionate:** Use the minimum force necessary for the shortest time.
- **Necessary:** Only intervene when there is no safer or effective alternative.

5. Best Interest of the Pupil

Consider:

- Is the intervention intended to protect the pupil or others from harm?
- Could the intervention cause emotional or physical trauma?
- Would stepping back, removing others, or waiting for help be safer?

Only proceed if the action clearly protects the pupil's welfare and dignity.





6. Physical Intervention

- Use approved techniques and follow training.
- Maintain communication and explain actions to the pupil.
- End the intervention as soon as it is safe to do so by constantly dynamically risk assessing when to dis-engage in the best interest of the child
- Preserve safety, dignity, and calm tone throughout.

7. Aftercare and Review

- Check for injuries to pupil or staff and record if any.
- Allow debrief and emotional support for all involved.
- Inform member of SLT and parents/carers.
- Record and report the incident.
- Review patterns, triggers, and behaviour plans to prevent recurrence.
- Staff and student de-briefs completed.
- Records monitored and quality assured.





Appendix 2 - Monitoring Procedure and Schedule Overview

To ensure consistency in staff information sharing, two distinct reporting and monitoring documents must be used:

1. an individual incident reporting form for every significant incident involving reasonable force, restraint or seclusion, and
2. a separate periodic data monitoring form used for same-day and 24 hour immediate, fortnightly, half-termly and termly review cycles. These forms serve different purposes and must not be used interchangeably.

Step 1: Same-Day SLT Notification & Review

Step 2 24-Hour Immediate Incident Review

Step 3: Fortnightly Monitoring Review (Headteacher/Head of School
+ Identified Staff Member)

Step 4: Every 6 Weeks Data Scrutiny (Headteacher/Head of School + Identified Staff
Member)

Step 5: Governing Body Oversight and Scrutiny





Appendix 3 - Storybrook Restrictive intervention definitions

Significant incident involving the use of force - an incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff, including where physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

Restraint - a non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises or limits a pupil's movement.

Non-force restraint - an intervention that restricts a pupil's movement without the use of physical force against the pupil.

Immobilisation - a restrictive intervention which prevents or significantly limits a pupil's movement.

Seclusion - a non-disciplinary safety intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and preventing them from leaving, including through physical obstruction or blocking, or by making them believe that they will be punished if they try to leave.

The specific physical techniques used by trained staff will be those covered by the school's current restrictive intervention training and must be used in accordance with that training, this policy, individual pupil planning where applicable, and the principles of necessity, proportionality and minimum force.

