RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTION AND REASONABLE FORCE POLICY

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Purpose

At Brentford School for Girls, we are committed to ensuring that every student is safe, respected and able to learn in a calm and supportive environment.

We believe that positive relationships are the foundation of effective behaviour support and that the vast majority of challenging situations can be successfully resolved through understanding, communication, de-escalation and restorative approaches. As a school, we seek to minimise the need for restrictive interventions by promoting emotionally safe learning environments, high expectations, strong pastoral support and personalised approaches to meeting students' needs.

Occasionally, situations arise where staff may need to take immediate action to prevent harm. In such circumstances, restrictive intervention, including the use of reasonable force, may be necessary to protect a student or others from injury, prevent serious damage to property or maintain the safety of the school community. **Any intervention will be used only when necessary, will be proportionate to the level of risk presented, and will be the**

least restrictive option available and applied for the shortest possible time. It will always be undertaken in a manner which preserves the dignity, welfare and rights of everyone involved.

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances as outlined in Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
This power applies to any member of staff at Brentford School for Girls. It can also apply to people whom the Executive Headteacher and/or the Head of School has temporarily put in charge of students such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying students on a school organised visit

Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where reasonable force is necessary, and that key members of staff are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations should they occur.

The application of any form of physical control places staff in a vulnerable situation and can only be justified according to the circumstances described in this policy. Staff therefore have a responsibility to follow the policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for physical intervention.

Brentford School for Girls recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and will ensure that the additional needs of students with SEND, disabilities or other vulnerabilities are carefully considered when making decisions regarding intervention and support.

This policy should be read alongside the school's Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, SEND Policy, Staff Code of Conduct and Health and Safety Policy.

Equality Statement

Some students display more challenging and physical behaviours both in and out of school. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise students' diverse circumstances. We ensure that all students have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face. We give special consideration to students who:

- have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or health conditions (see Students with SEND and Disabilities);
- are young carers;
- may experience discrimination due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender identification or sexuality;
- have English as an additional language (EAL);
- are known to be living in difficult situations, for example temporary accommodation or where there are issues such as substance abuse or domestic violence;
- are at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual exploitation, forced marriage or radicalisation;

- are asylum seekers;
- are at risk due to either their own or a family member's mental health needs;
- are looked after or previously looked after;
- are missing or absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions; and
- have a parent/carer who has expressed an intention to remove them from school to be home educated.

Legal Framework

This policy is informed by the following legislation and guidance:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Behaviour in Schools Guidance;
- Restrictive Interventions, including Use of Reasonable Force in Schools (DfE, 2026);
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025.

The school recognises its duty to protect students from harm whilst respecting their rights, dignity and welfare.

Ethos and Principles

The school's approach to behaviour support and safeguarding is underpinned by the following principles.

Relationships First. Positive relationships are fundamental to effective behaviour support and safeguarding.

Prevention Before Intervention. The school seeks to understand and address the underlying causes of behaviour before situations escalate. This is based on the belief that behaviour communicates need and that students should be supported to regulate their emotions and behaviour wherever possible.

Minimising the Need for Restrictive Intervention

The school will prioritise prevention and early intervention by:

- seeking to understand the causes of distress and dysregulation;
- using de-escalation strategies before considering restrictive intervention;
- working collaboratively with students and families to reduce future risk;
- ensuring staff receive appropriate training and support; and

- reviewing incidents to identify lessons learned and opportunities to improve practice.

Least Restrictive Practice. Where intervention is necessary to maintain safety, staff will use the least restrictive option appropriate to the circumstances.

Individual Needs Matter. Students' individual circumstances, including SEND, disability, communication needs, trauma experiences and medical needs, will be considered when making decisions about support and intervention.

Reflection and Learning. Every incident provides an opportunity to reflect, learn, improve support and reduce the likelihood of future occurrences.

Restrictive Intervention Is Not Punishment. Restrictive intervention must never be used as a sanction or punishment.

Terminology and Definitions

Definitions: Physical Contact and Restrictive Interventions

Physical Contact

Physical contact refers to appropriate, reasonable and necessary contact between staff and students in the ordinary course of school life. This may include contact during sports and physical education (PE), administering first aid, comforting a distressed student, offering assistance or greeting a student with a handshake. Such contact does not constitute a restrictive intervention, provided it is appropriate to the circumstances and does not intentionally restrict a student's freedom of movement.

Restrictive Intervention

A restrictive intervention is any deliberate action by a member of staff that restricts, prevents or limits a student's movement, liberty or freedom to act independently. It is an umbrella term covering both physical and non-physical interventions intended to restrict or control a student's movement or actions. Restrictive interventions may include:

- physically guiding a student away from danger;
- blocking access to an unsafe area;
- preventing a student from leaving a location where doing so would present a significant risk of harm;
- preventing a student from harming themselves or others;
- physical restraint or the use of reasonable force;
- removing an item that presents a safety risk; and
- seclusion in exceptional circumstances.

Restrictive interventions must always be considered a last resort and used only when necessary, reasonable and proportionate to the circumstances. Wherever possible, preventative, supportive and de-escalation strategies should be used instead.

Reasonable Force

Reasonable force is a term used in legislation to describe the use of force that is necessary and proportionate to achieve a legitimate and lawful aim. All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances.

The degree of force used must be the minimum necessary and must last for the shortest possible time. Whether the use of force is reasonable will depend on the circumstances, including

- the seriousness and likelihood of the risk of harm;
- the age, understanding and individual needs of the student, including any known disability, special educational needs (SEND) or medical needs; and
- the availability of less restrictive alternatives.

It will also depend on the need to prevent injury to students, staff or others, serious damage to property, the commission of an offence or serious disruption to good order and discipline.

Any force used must be **necessary, proportionate and reasonable** in the circumstances, and must be continually reviewed throughout the incident. Reasonable force must never be used as a punishment, to intentionally inflict pain, out of frustration, anger or retaliation, or where a less restrictive alternative is available.

Physical Restraint

A term used in legislation referring to a non-disciplinary 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. For example, removing a student's crutches to prevent them from moving would also constitute restraint.

Physical restraint should only be used where

- there is an immediate risk of significant harm and
- where alternative approaches are insufficient to maintain safety.

It must never be used as a disciplinary measure or punishment.

Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary restrictive intervention in which a student is kept alone in a room or designated area and prevented from leaving when they wish to do so. This may

involve physical obstruction, blocking an exit or creating the belief that the student will be punished if they attempt to leave.

Seclusion should only be considered in exceptional circumstances where necessary to prevent significant harm. Any use of seclusion requires enhanced monitoring, recording and leadership oversight.

Significant Incident

A significant incident is any incident in which staff use force beyond appropriate, ordinary physical contact with a student. This includes the use of physical force to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention, such as blocking a student from leaving an area or preventing them from accessing a particular location.

All significant incidents must be recorded, reported and reviewed in accordance with the school's safeguarding and behaviour procedures.

Minimising the Need for Restrictive Intervention

Brentford School for Girls is committed to reducing the need for restrictive interventions through proactive, preventative and supportive approaches. These include

- effective classroom practice and positive relationships;
- clear routines, boundaries and expectations;
- restorative approaches; and strong pastoral support through Heads of Years and pastoral teams.

They also include effective safeguarding systems,

- reasonable adjustments for students with SEND,
- individual behaviour support planning and appropriate risk assessments,
- close partnership with parents and carers and
- early intervention and targeted pastoral support.

Strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour

Staff must consistently use positive strategies to encourage acceptable behaviour and good order. Every effort will be made to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to students or staff, property, buildings or the environment.

Where unacceptable behaviour threatens good order and discipline and provokes intervention, some or all of the following approaches should be taken, according to the circumstances of the incident:

- verbal acknowledgement of the unacceptable behaviour, with a request for the student to refrain;

- a further verbal reprimand stating that this is the second request for compliance, with an explanation of why the observed behaviour is unacceptable and what will happen if it continues;
- a warning of the intention to intervene physically, and that this will cease when the student complies, summoning assistance if possible; and
- physical intervention, which uses reasonable force, meaning the minimum degree of force necessary to prevent a student harming themselves, others or property.

De-escalation techniques

Staff should draw on the use of their voice and words, and on distraction techniques. They should remove any objects or implements that are making the situation unsafe. Where possible, they should also seek support from other members of staff, particularly those who have a good relationship with the student or who may simply offer a fresh face.

Non-verbal strategies

Staff should model the behaviour they want the student to emulate, as relaxed and open body language can be helpful. This means appearing calm and self-assured and making sure that they are not displaying the same signs of agitation that can be seen in the student, while maintaining a neutral facial expression. Staff **should also allow space.** Entering a person's personal space can be useful to refocus on a task when the situation is calm, but when a student is agitated it can indicate aggression and escalate the situation. Staying some distance away will also help keep staff safe should the student become physically aggressive.

Verbal strategies

Staff should lower their voice and keep their tone even, as it is hard to escalate a conversation with someone who is responding calmly. Distraction and diversion are extremely useful. When a student is aggressive they are responding with their own fight-or-flight instincts and are not thinking about their actions, so staff should try to engage their thinking brain, perhaps by changing the subject or commenting on something happening outside the window.

Giving choices, and repeating them using the broken-record technique if necessary, can help, and staff should not be drawn into secondary behaviours such as arguing back, which are designed to distract or upset. Acknowledging the student's feelings shows that they have been listened to and can be crucial in defusing a situation; for example, *'It must be really difficult for you … thank you for letting me know'*. Words and phrases such as *'I wonder if…', 'Let's try…', 'It seems like…' and 'Maybe we can…'* also help to de-escalate. Staff should tell the student what they want them to do rather than what they do not want them to do; for example, *'I want you to sit down' rather than 'Stop arguing with me'.*

Staff should remember the strong relationships they have with students within the school and use their knowledge of individual students to support the de-escalation of situations. For example, if a member of staff knows a student and their behaviour patterns well and believes the student is about to become aggressive or cause damage, they may use the strategies in this policy to remove the student from the classroom before the situation escalates. Reasonable force or restraint should only be used when all other reasonable methods of managing such situations have been tried.

There are a number of ways in which staff can apply restrictive interventions and staff must use their professional judgement to choose the strategy appropriate to the situation and presenting least risk to themselves, the student and other persons. Appropriate actions include the following

Shepherding or Guiding: using body positioning and positive gestures to move a student away from harm. This may include the placing of a hand on the back and using reasonable force to actively move them from one place to another.
Blocking or Interposing placing themselves between the student and their objective (e.g. exit, another student) thereby preventing the potential injury, damage or prejudice to good order
Holding and Leading: leading the student (with open hand e.g by the upper arm) to prevent them from injury, damage, etc. In cases of resistance from a student, it may be necessary to employ
holding to effectively achieve shepherding and actively lead them away.
Restraining: must only be used in the most extreme cases, restraining may require a significant amount of force in order to prevent significant injury. Essentially, restraining is a more
extreme version of holding, may require more than one adult and may last significantly longer than
other strategies. However, the same care must be taken to restrain a student appropriately and safely.

Students with SEND and Disabilities

The school recognises that some students may experience periods of distress, dysregulation or crisis linked to

- SEND, autism, speech, language and communication needs, social, emotional and mental health needs,
- traumatic experiences or
- medical conditions.

Triggers may include

- pain,
- sensory overload,
- unfamiliar situations or environments, or

- feelings of fear and anxiety.

Students who find verbal communication challenging may express their needs, discomfort or confusion through their actions, which can lead to students with SEND being disproportionately subject to the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions. The school will therefore always seek to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour so that it can provide proactive support and create an inclusive environment.

Where risks are identified, the school may develop behaviour support plans or risk assessments in partnership with students, parents/carers, SEND staff and external professionals. Staff who know individual students well will be used to help identify and manage risk, including trigger points when challenging behaviour is more likely to occur. Such plans may identify:

- likely triggers;
- early warning signs;
- preferred communication approaches;
- successful de-escalation techniques;
- reasonable adjustments; and
- agreed responses during periods of heightened risk.

Where a plan allows for increased physical contact with a student, the circumstances and parameters will be agreed with the relevant people, including parents/carers, staff and health professionals, and stated clearly in the plan. Whether the use of reasonable force or another restrictive intervention is appropriate will always depend on the circumstances at the time, irrespective of whether it has been considered as part of a behaviour support plan.

Determining Whether Use of Restrictive Intervention is Appropriate

Before using any restrictive intervention, staff should undertake a risk assessment and consider the following questions.

Is Intervention Necessary?

Staff should consider whether

- there is a real and immediate risk of harm,
- whether a criminal offence is likely to occur,
- whether serious property damage is likely, and
- whether there is a serious risk to good order and safety.

They should also assess whether intervention is likely to reduce the risk successfully, or whether it would escalate the situation or cause more harm than the behaviour itself.

Have Less Restrictive Alternatives Been Considered?

Staff should consider whether the situation could be managed through verbal de-escalation, distraction, offering choices, strategic withdrawal, environmental changes, support from additional staff or the strategies set out in the student's behaviour support plan.

Is Intervention Proportionate?

Staff should consider the

- seriousness of the risk,
- the level of intervention proposed,
- how long intervention is likely to be required and
- whether a less restrictive option could be equally effective.

They should use the least amount of force, or the least restrictive intervention, necessary for the shortest time required to reduce the risk. If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy.

Has the student's welfare been considered?

Staff should consider the impact on the student's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. Students who have experienced an adverse life event, who have diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, or who have experienced past trauma or neglect or have communication difficulties may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.

Staff should seek to maintain respect for the student's dignity, which may include, where possible,

- considering the location and environment in which any intervention is used, such as whether it takes place in front of their peers.
- clearly and calmly communicate to the student what is happening and why, and
- explain what the student needs to do.
- for students with difficulties with speech, language and communication, or with English as an additional language, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies should be used to ensure that the student understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.
- staff should also seek to understand how the student is feeling and use this to determine whether the intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

This list of factors is not exhaustive, and staff should also take into account other relevant considerations.

Training on the use of restrictive interventions will equip staff to judge when it is appropriate to use them, including in situations where quick decisions are needed, and will help staff understand how to assess whether their response is reasonable under pressure. Where possible, staff are encouraged **to sense-check their decisions continually in the moment and to reflect on them after the event**. If an assessment has been made to use a restrictive intervention, staff should be supported in their decision making. The school expects all restrictive interventions to be demonstrably necessary, proportionate and in the best interests of maintaining safety.

No member of staff is required to employ any restrictive interventions or use reasonable force if they are not comfortable or confident to do so effectively. No member of staff should intervene physically if they have reason to believe that to do so would worsen the situation/incident that is taking place. Brentford School for Girls do not require parental consent to use restrictive interventions or reasonable force

When Reasonable Force May Be Used

Reasonable force may be used when a student:

- is physically assaulting another person;
- is fighting;
- is causing significant damage to property;
- is attempting to leave a safe environment and place themselves at risk;
- is engaged in behaviour likely to cause injury; or
- is preventing staff from maintaining the safety of others.

Examples may include

- separating students involved in a fight,
- preventing a student from leaving a safe supervised environment where there is immediate risk,
- preventing self-injurious behaviour and preventing the dangerous misuse of equipment.

Where physical intervention is needed, it may involve staff physically placing themselves between students where there is a potential fight, blocking a student's path to stop them harming another student, or escorting a student away from a dangerous situation. Wherever possible, assistance will be sought from another member of staff before intervening.

Any force used must be the minimum necessary and applied for the shortest possible time. Whenever reasonable force is used, staff should keep talking to the student, using calm language to de-escalate the situation, narrating their actions and making sure the student is aware of what they need to do for the use of force to end.

Unacceptable Uses of Force

The following practices are prohibited and must never be used:

- force used as punishment;
- force used to secure compliance where there is no immediate risk;
- deliberate infliction of pain;
- humiliation or degradation;
- use of force through anger or frustration;
- restricting breathing;
- neck restraints;
- headlocks;
- pressure to the neck, chest, throat or abdomen;
- prolonged restraint once risk has reduced;
- restraint that interferes with communication;
- denying access to medication or medical assistance;
- preventing access to toileting facilities where safe access can be provided; and
- the use of force solely because a student has damaged property where there is no ongoing risk.

Students **must not be restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation.** The use of force can be dangerous, particularly where it occurs on the ground. If a student is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their hold or reposition into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible, and the student should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. Any form of restraint, including seated and standing restraint, carries a risk of physical and psychological harm and should be avoided where possible. Staff must discontinue any intervention immediately once the risk requiring intervention has passed.

Procedures During an Incident

Where possible,

- another member of staff should attend the incident.
- Reception should be informed using established emergency procedures and should contact a member of the Leadership Team and/or the member of staff on call.
- Staff should continue communicating with the student throughout the incident, reassuring and supporting them, and
- interventions should cease as soon as safety is restored.

The welfare of all students must remain paramount throughout.

Following an Incident: Post-Incident Procedures

Following any significant restrictive intervention, the school will ensure that appropriate support, debriefing and review take place.

Student Support

The student should be given an opportunity to discuss the incident and contribute their account of events wherever possible. They should receive appropriate emotional support and, where appropriate, take part in restorative conversations or processes. A suitable member of staff, such as a form tutor or Head of Year, should check on the student during the school day to make sure they are well and have not been hurt.

Staff Support

Staff involved should receive an appropriate debrief within 48 hours and be offered access to wellbeing support where needed. They should also be given the opportunity to reflect on the incident and to consider whether alternative strategies could be used in future.

Incident Review

The school should review each incident to identify:

- the triggers and underlying causes of the incident;
- the effectiveness of the de-escalation strategies used;
- any changes required to individual behaviour support plans;
- any necessary amendments to risk assessments;
- staff training needs and opportunities for improved practice; and
- any relevant safeguarding considerations.

Recording and Reporting

All incidents involving restrictive intervention, restraint or the use of reasonable force must be recorded on CPOMS before the end of the next working day. The record must include:

- date and time;
- location;
- names of all staff involved;
- names of all students involved;
- witnesses;
- antecedents and triggers;
- de-escalation strategies attempted;
- rationale for intervention;
- type of intervention used;
- duration;
- injuries sustained;

- post-incident support provided; and
- actions taken following the incident.

The student's views should also be recorded wherever possible.

Parents and Carers: Communication Following Restrictive Intervention

Parents and carers will be informed as soon as reasonably practicable following any significant incident involving restrictive intervention, the use of reasonable force or seclusion, and the school will always seek to make contact on the same day. Communication should explain the reason intervention was required, the de-escalation strategies attempted beforehand, the type and duration of the intervention used, whether any injuries occurred and the support provided to the student following the incident. It should also set out any changes required to risk assessments or individual support plans.

Parents and carers will be offered an opportunity to discuss the incident, share relevant information and contribute to decisions about any subsequent support arrangements or future planning. A written record of all parental communication should be kept on CPOMS. Where restrictive intervention involves a student with SEND, consideration should be given to whether a review or amendment of their individual support plan or risk assessment is required.

Seclusion

The school does not use seclusion as a disciplinary sanction. In exceptional circumstances a student may require temporary separation from others in order to prevent immediate harm, maintain safety or support de-escalation. Where a student is prevented from leaving an area, this constitutes seclusion. Seclusion should never be implemented through the threat of punishment, and the place in which the student is kept should be safe and should not feel threatening or intimidating. Any use of seclusion must:

- be authorised by a member of the Leadership Team where practicable;
- be continuously monitored;
- last only for the shortest possible time;
- cease immediately when risk reduces;
- be recorded in full on CPOMS;
- be reported to parents/carers; and
- be reviewed by a senior leader following the incident.

A student in seclusion must be observed continuously, have access to support and be able to communicate with staff, and their welfare must be monitored throughout.

Other Physical Contact with Students

Not all physical contact constitutes restraint or restrictive intervention. Staff may have lawful and appropriate physical contact with students for reasons including

- providing first aid,
- supporting mobility,
- assisting a student in distress,
- delivering PE instruction,
- practical curriculum activities,
- guiding a student away from danger, and
- comforting a student where this is appropriate and welcomed by the student.

Such contact must always be professional, proportionate, age appropriate, culturally sensitive and responsive to individual needs. Staff should be sensitive to any verbal or non-verbal indication that a student does not want to be touched and should remain mindful of safeguarding considerations at all times.

Use of Force to Search

In certain circumstances staff may use reasonable force to conduct a search in accordance with statutory guidance on Searching, Screening and Confiscation. Reasonable force may only be used where:

- a student refuses to cooperate with a lawful search;
- there are reasonable grounds for suspecting prohibited items are present; and
- the search is necessary for the safety of the student or others.

Any search involving force must be authorised in accordance with school procedures, involve the minimum force necessary and be witnessed wherever possible. It must be recorded on CPOMS and reported to parents/carers as soon as reasonably practicable. The school will follow current DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance in all such cases.

Governance and Monitoring

The Headteacher/ DSL will ensure that all incidents are reviewed. Monitoring helps to ensure that staff are following the correct procedures and alerts the school to the needs of any student whose behaviour can only be contained using reasonable force. Termly reports will be presented to Governors which include anonymised information regarding:

- frequency of incidents;
- repeat incidents;
- students with SEND;
- protected characteristic groups;

- injuries;
- emerging trends; and
- actions taken to reduce restrictive interventions.

Governors will monitor the use of restrictive interventions to ensure that practice remains lawful, proportionate and consistent with safeguarding duties.

Complaints and Allegations

Any complaints regarding the use of restrictive interventions will 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 will be followed. This includes the provisions regarding suspension of staff.