SHREWSBURY HOUSE SCHOOL
FOUNDED 1865

POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY

Policy Owner:	Senior Deputy Head
Approved by:	Executive Head
Date of last review:	September 2026
Review Date:	September 2027

(Incorporating the Use of Reasonable Force and Seclusion in line with the April 2026 DfE Guidance on restrictive interventions).

1. Summary and Legal Framework

Section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 clarifies the powers of staff to use reasonable force to prevent pupils from committing a crime, causing injury or damage, or causing disorder. This policy also adheres to the Schools' mandatory duties for recording and reporting incidents.

Neither the Act, nor this policy document, authorises the use of corporal punishment in any circumstances nor are they intended to encourage the use of inappropriate force. It is also important to note that within the school community, there are times when 'positive handling' may be appropriate. Such examples include good practice for appropriate and proper teaching and instruction, in sports or in connection with a pupil's health and welfare.

2. Key Terminology

- **Restrictive Intervention:** a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This guidance uses 'restrictive interventions' as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways.
- **Reasonable Force:** a term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances.4 Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.
- **Seclusion:** a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others, and preventing them from leaving either by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave.

- **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.

3. Allowable Physical Intervention and Searching

Staff may use reasonable force to prevent injury, criminal offences, property damage, or disorder.

- **Searching Pupils:** Reasonable force may be used to search for **legally prohibited items** (e.g., weapons, drugs). However, force **must not** be used to search for items banned only under school rules.
- **Unacceptable Force:** Staff must not use holds that affect the airway, breathing, or circulation (e.g., neck holds or face-down restraint).
- ***Medical Care:*** Following any incident where restraint has been applied, or if any pupil is distressed or injured, an immediate medical assessment must be conducted.
- ***No Contact Disclaimer:*** The school does not operate a 'no contact' policy, recognising that professional, appropriate physical contact is sometimes necessary to ensure pupil safety and welfare.

4. Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Staff must consider the impact of restrictive interventions on pupils with SEND or those who have experienced past trauma or neglect.

- **Behaviour Support Plans:** Staff should work with parents to co-produce plans that identify triggers and de-escalation strategies.
- **Proactive Strategies:** Staff should use strategies such as removing stimuli, changing body language, or providing "cool-off" bases before behaviour escalates.

5. Seclusion as a Safety Measure

Seclusion must only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm during high levels of dysregulation.

- It is **not** a disciplinary punishment.
- The pupil **must be supervised at all times** and allowed to leave as soon as the risk of harm reduces.

6. Statutory Recording and Reporting Duties

The school is legally required to record and report any **significant incident** where force or seclusion is used.

- **Timeline:** Staff must record the incident as soon as practicable and endeavour to do so no later than the same day.

- **Record Content:** Incidents should be recorded on the Daybook within SchoolBase and SLT informed immediately through the SLT 'tag'. The SDH will keep a log of all incidents using SchoolBase. Records must include:
    - the name(s) of the pupil(s) involved, and when and where the incident took place; the name of any other staff or pupils who witnessed the incident;
    - the reason why force was necessary (e.g. to prevent injury to the pupil, another pupil or member of staff);
    - how the incident began and progressed, including details of the pupil's behaviour, what was said by each of the parties, the steps taken to defuse or calm the situation, the degree of force used, how that was applied, and for how long;
    - the pupil's response, and the outcome of the incident;
    - details of any injury suffered by the pupil, another pupil, or a member of staff and of any damage to property.
    - Staff may find it helpful to seek advice from the Deputy Head when compiling a report. They should also keep a copy of the report.
    - The Deputy Head or member of staff to whom the incident is reported, will need to consider whether the parents of the child concerned should be contacted immediately or at the end of the school day, and whether parents should be told orally or in writing.
- **Reporting to Parents:** Parents must be notified as soon as practicable, and no later than the same day. This report should be provided in writing (e.g., via email in SB). The school may withhold reporting an incident to parents only if there is reasonable belief that doing so would place the pupil at risk of serious harm. In such cases, the incident will be immediately escalated to the Local Authority safeguarding team.

7. Post-Incident Support and Debriefing

Following an incident, the school will facilitate a follow-up conversation (debrief) to support wellbeing and repair relationships.

- This process should involve separate reflections from the staff and pupils.
- Ideally, the debrief should be facilitated by a staff member not involved in the incident to ensure impartiality.

8. Governing Body Oversight and Data

The Governing Body will regularly review data on restrictive interventions to:

- Identify repeat patterns and triggers for specific pupils.
- Monitor for disproportionate use of interventions against pupils with protected characteristics or SEND.
- Assess the effectiveness of current support measures and staff training needs.

9. Complaints

Effective communication with parents whose child has been involved in a physical restraint incident, and close adherence to this policy should help to avoid complaints from parents. It may not necessarily prevent a complaint, however, and a dispute about the use of force by a member of staff may lead to an investigation, either internally or in more serious cases by the Police and Social Services department under child-protection procedures. Parents may make a complaint through the School's Complaints Procedure which is available on the School website and in written form on request.

ANNEX A Guidance and Advice to Staff

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

a) Involve the SEN Co-ordinator or other named member of staff and parents in developing the school's policy and practice on the use of force. This will help ensure that appropriate account is taken of the needs of individual pupils particularly those with SEN and/or disabilities.

b) Develop positive handling plans for individual pupils assessed as being at greatest risk of needing restrictive physical interventions in consultation with the pupil and his or her parents. Positive handling plans set out the techniques that should be used and those that should not normally be used. Any planned use of physical intervention should be compatible with a pupil's statement and properly documented in the school records. Further advice on positive handling plans and managing risks for pupils who present particularly challenging behaviours can be found on the DfE website.

c) As far as practically possible, make staff who come into contact with such pupils aware of the relevant characteristics of those individuals, particularly:

i) situations that may provoke difficult behaviour, preventive strategies and what de escalation techniques are most likely to work.

ii) what is most likely to trigger a violent reaction, including relevant information relating to any previous incident requiring use of force; and

iii) if physical intervention is likely to be needed, any specific strategies and techniques that have been agreed by staff, parents and pupils concerned.

Information from parents may be as valuable as information held by the school. Some of this information may be sensitive. The school should seek express (preferably written) consent from the parent to inform appropriate staff. However, where consent is unreasonably withheld the information may still be made available to staff who need it where minimising the chances of force being required would be in the vital interests of the pupil concerned. The importance of providing such information will be a factor in decisions about giving temporary authorisation to parent volunteers and others to supervise pupils.

d) Designated staff to be called if incidents related to particular pupils occur. This does not necessarily mean waiting for them to arrive before taking action if the need is urgent. However, they should always be involved in post-incident follow-up.

e) Teach pupils who are at risk how to communicate in times of crisis and strategies to use in a crisis (such as using personal communication passports and non-verbal signals to indicate the need to use a designated quiet area or cool-off base) and ensure staff are familiar with these strategies

ANNEX B - Staff Induction and Training

The member of staff responsible for the implementation of training has been alerted to the updating of this policy and future staff induction training will be based on the revised document.

ANNEX C - Restraint and Reasonable Force

a) **Types of incident where restraint may be appropriate**

There is a wide variety of situations in which reasonable force might be appropriate, or necessary, to control or restrain a pupil:

- where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury;
- where there is a developing risk of injury, or significant damage to property;
- where a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline.

Examples of situations that fall within one of the first two categories are:

- a pupil attacks a member of staff or another pupil;
- pupils are fighting;
- a pupil is engaged in, or is on the verge of committing, deliberate damage or vandalism to property;
- a pupil is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials or objects;
- a pupil is running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way in which he might have or cause an accident likely to injure himself or others;
- a pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave school (N.B. this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school).

Examples of situations that fall into the third category are:

- a pupil persistently refuses to obey an order to leave a classroom;
- a pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson.

b) **Reasonable force**

There is no legal definition of 'reasonable force', so it is not possible to set out comprehensively when it is reasonable to use force, or the degree of force that may reasonably be used. It will always depend on all the circumstances of the case.

There are two relevant considerations:

- The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it. The use of **any** degree of force is unlawful if the particular circumstances do not warrant the use of physical force. Therefore physical force could not be justified to prevent a pupil from committing a trivial misdemeanour, or in a situation that clearly could be resolved without force.
- The degree of force employed must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or the consequences it is intended to prevent. **Any force used should always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result.**

Whether it is reasonable to use force, and the degree of force that could reasonably be employed might also depend on the age, understanding, and sex of the pupil.

c) **Practical considerations**

Before intervening physically a member of staff should, wherever practicable, tell the pupil who is misbehaving to stop, and what will happen if he or she does not. The teacher should continue attempting to communicate with the pupil throughout the incident, and should make it clear that physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary. A calm and measured approach to a situation is needed and staff should never give the impression that they have lost their temper, or are acting out of anger or frustration, or to punish the pupil.

Sometimes a teacher should not intervene in an incident without help (unless it is an emergency). This may be the case, for example, when dealing with an older pupil, or a physically large pupil, or more than one pupil, or if the teacher believes he or she may be at risk of injury. In those circumstances the teacher should remove other pupils who might be at risk, and summon assistance from a colleague or colleagues, or where necessary summon the Police. The teacher should inform the pupil(s) that he or she has sent for help. Until assistance arrives the teacher should continue to attempt to defuse the situation orally, and try to prevent the incident from escalating.

d) **Application of force**

Physical intervention can take several forms. It might involve staff:

- physically interposing between pupils;
- blocking a pupil's path;
- holding;
- pushing;
- pulling;
- leading a pupil by the hand or arm;
- shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back;
- (in extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds.

In exceptional circumstances, where there is an immediate risk of injury, a member of staff may need to take necessary action that is consistent with the concept of 'reasonable force', for example to prevent a young pupil running off a pavement onto a busy road, or to prevent a pupil hitting someone, or throwing something.

Staff should **not** act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example:

- holding a pupil around the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict the pupil's ability to breathe;
- slapping, punching or kicking a pupil;
- twisting or forcing limbs against a joint;
- tripping up a pupil;
- holding or pulling a pupil by the hair or ear;
- holding a pupil face down on the ground.

Staff should always avoid touching or holding a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent.

Where the risk is not so urgent the teacher should consider carefully whether, and if so when, physical intervention is right. Teachers should always try to deal with a situation through other strategies before using force. All teachers need developed strategies and techniques for dealing with difficult pupils and situations. In a non-urgent situation, force should only be used when other methods have failed.

That consideration is particularly appropriate in situations where the aim is to maintain good order and discipline, and there is no direct risk to people or property. As the key issue is establishing good order, any action which could exacerbate the situation needs to be avoided. The possible consequences of intervening physically, including the risk of increasing the disruption or actually provoking an attack, need to be carefully evaluated.

The age and level of understanding of the pupil is also relevant in those circumstances. Physical intervention to enforce compliance with staff instructions is likely to be increasingly inappropriate with older pupils. It should never be used as a substitute for good management of behaviour.

e) **Physical contact with pupils in other circumstances**

There are occasions when physical contact with a pupil may be proper or necessary other than those covered by Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Some physical contact may be necessary to demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons, sports coaching, music lessons or DT, or if a member of staff has to give first aid. Young children and children with special educational needs may need staff to provide physical prompts or help. Touching may also be appropriate where a pupil is in distress and needs comforting. Teachers will use their own professional judgement when they feel a pupil needs this kind of support.

There may be some children for whom touching is particularly unwelcome. For example, some pupils may be particularly sensitive to physical contact because of their cultural background, or because they have been abused. It is important that all staff receive information on these children. In addition, the school will need to develop clear common practice towards particular groups of children and events. Physical contact with pupils becomes increasingly open to question as pupils reach and go through adolescence, and staff should also bear in mind that even innocent and well-intentioned physical contact can sometimes be misconstrued.