



**STOUR VALE  
ACADEMY  
TRUST**

# **RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS POLICY**

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## 1. Aims

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear, consistent procedures for the use of restrictive interventions at Stour Vale Academy Trust ("Trust") settings, on the rare occasion that they are necessary. The policy aims to safeguard the welfare and dignity of all pupils, support positive behaviour, and minimise the need for restrictive practices. The policy ensures compliance with the Department for Education guidance effective from 1st April 2026.

## 2. Principles

Trust staff recognise that the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, can have a significant impact on pupils, staff members and parents. However, there are times when the use of restrictive interventions will be lawful and necessary; for example, to keep individuals and the wider school community safe.

Restrictive interventions shall only be employed as a last resort and must always be **necessary, proportionate**, and in the best interests of the **pupil's welfare**. Trust settings use both individual approaches and whole-school measures to effectively manage behaviour through prevention and de-escalation. The Trust is committed to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in its practices.

## 3. Legislation and Guidance

This policy is informed by the following legislation and guidance:

- Department for Education Restrictive Interventions Guidance (effective 01/04/2026)
- Education Act 2002
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice

All interventions must comply with statutory requirements and the latest DfE guidance.

This policy adheres to the principles under data protection law. For further information please review the Trust's data protection policy published on the Trust's website.

## 4. Key Terms

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' movement. For example, putting a pupil in a room and not allowing them to leave is a restrictive intervention.

**Reasonable force** is the amount of force that staff members can (in certain circumstances) legally use to temporarily restrict a pupil's movement. It means using no more force than is necessary, for the least amount of time for the desired outcome.

A **significant incident** is any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact (see definition below) between a member of staff and a pupil.

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

**Seclusion** is a non-disciplinary intervention that keeps a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevents them from leaving or entering, for the safety of that pupil and/or others. Some schools may use internal suspension as a sanction or intervention for poor behaviour, where a pupil is kept separate from peers during the school day. This is not seclusion.

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

All **staff** are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy and attending relevant training.

The **Headteacher** will ensure effective implementation, monitoring, and review. They will consider and implement appropriate training for staff dependent on the needs of their individual settings.

The **Safeguarding Lead** and/or **SENCO** will be involved to advise and support where appropriate.

**Governors and Trustees** are accountable for policy oversight and adherence to statutory requirements.

## 6. Use of Restrictive Interventions

### 6.1 Overview

All members of 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

It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment.

Trust staff recognise that any restraint carries a risk of physical and psychological harm, and should be avoided wherever possible. Therefore, before using a restrictive intervention with a pupil, staff must consider the following:

If it's **necessary**: Staff should consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation. Also, staff should assess whether the intervention is likely to reduce risks or might escalate the situation further.

If it's **proportionate**: Staff should use the least restrictive intervention for the least amount of time. Staff should consider the personal circumstances of the pupil such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.

**The pupil's welfare**: Staff should consider the impact that the use of force or restrictive interventions can have on a pupil, for example for pupils who have experienced adverse life events. They should also seek to maintain respect for their dignity. Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and explain what the pupil needs to do.

### *6.2 Whole-school measure for minimising restrictive intervention*

Whole-school measures can include:

- 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

### *6.3 Individual approaches for minimising restrictive intervention*

Individual approaches can include:

- working closely with parents 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

### *6.4 SEND Considerations*

Pupils with SEND may require specific approaches due to their needs and vulnerabilities. Staff must ensure reasonable adjustments are made, consulting with

SENCOs and specialists where required. Interventions should be tailored, avoiding unnecessary distress or escalation, and always in line with the SEND Code of Practice.

#### *6.5 When restrictive intervention becomes necessary*

After considering the tests of necessity, proportionality and keeping the pupil's welfare at the centre of all decision making, there may still be times when restrictive intervention becomes necessary. In these rare situations staff should use the least restrictive intervention for the least amount of time.

If an assessment has been made to use restrictive interventions, staff should be supported in their decision making by a senior leader where available.

#### *6.6 Searching Pupils*

Head teachers and staff they authorise, have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item. A member of staff can use such force as is reasonable to search for legally prohibited items, but not to search for items banned under the school rules only.

#### *6.7 Seclusion*

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving. In some circumstances it might be used as a measure to avoid the need for physical restraint. It should only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. In such circumstances, the pupil is not acting with intent. Seclusion should not be implemented by staff through threat of punishment. The place to which the pupil is confined should be safe and not feel threatening or intimidating to the pupil. The pupil should be supervised at all times during the period of seclusion. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil should be allowed to leave.

#### *6.8 After an incident*

The wellbeing of pupils and staff is paramount. If appropriate, the pupil and staff member involved should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. Any injuries should be recorded in accordance with Trust policies.

The incident should be recorded, reported and evaluated as soon as is practicable after the incident.

### **7. Recording Requirements**

Any restrictive intervention, including seclusion will be documented promptly and accurately. Records will be maintained securely in accordance with data protection

standards and using The Trust format. They will be made available for review by school and trust leaders.

In particular, the following information will be recorded:

- names of pupil and staff directly involved
- any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code
- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- how and when parents/carers were notified
- brief account of the incident, including what led up to the incident, identified or potential triggers if known, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used, and (where relevant) what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of any physical injuries sustained. This may include witness accounts
- brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance
- any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries and additional support provided.

## **8. Reporting and Evaluation**

Incidents involving restrictive interventions must be reported internally to designated safeguarding leads and senior leadership. External reporting to parents, carers, or relevant authorities will occur in accordance with statutory guidance and Trust protocols. Patterns and trends will be reviewed regularly to inform practice and policy development.

### *8.1 Reporting to Parents/Carers*

A report of the incident will be made to parents as soon as possible and certainly on the day of the incident. In addition to a phone call, schools will follow up with written communication and will offer a follow-up face-to-face discussion.

The report will include the following details as a minimum:

- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
- brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force
- details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable.

The requirement to report applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parents as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

An exception to the requirement to report to parents/carers will be made if school leaders believe that doing so would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. In this instance, safeguarding procedures will be followed.

If a parent/carer has a complaint regarding the use of restrictive interventions, it will be dealt with in accordance with the trust's normal complaints process.

### *8.2 Internal reporting and evaluation*

A report of each incident will be made using The Trust process and will include all the information outlined in section 7. As soon as is practicable, the Headteacher, or a delegated senior leader will hold a follow-up conversation to facilitate reflection, learning and to support pupil and staff wellbeing. This conversation will be part of the overall debriefing process and look to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from both the staff and pupils involved, as well as to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue. Such reports will be made available to Trust leaders for analysis and reflection across the whole organisation.

Local Governing Bodies and Trustees will regularly review restrictive intervention data to help identify learning and development.

## **9. Links to Other Policies**

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- SEND Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection Policy