

Restrictive Interventions and Use of Reasonable Force Policy

Date of policy review:	June 2026
Date for review:	January 2027
Lead for review:	Deputy Head Pastoral & Boarding

Policy Statement

Guildhouse school is committed to maintaining a safe, calm and supportive environment for all students and staff. We recognise that restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, can have a significant impact and must only be used lawfully, proportionately and as a last resort. Guildhouse school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all students in both day and boarding provision. In line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance (April 2026), the school prioritises prevention, early intervention and de-escalation strategies to minimise the need for restrictive practices

This policy applies to:

- All staff, including teaching, boarding, pastoral, support and agency staff
- All students
- All environments: classrooms, boarding houses, trips, transport, and off-site provision

Legal Framework

This policy is informed by:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Section 93)
- DfE *Restrictive Interventions, including the Use of Reasonable Force in Schools* (April 2026)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Equality Act 2010
- National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools

Staff have the legal power to use reasonable force to:

- Prevent a student committing an offence
- Prevent injury to themselves or others
- Prevent damage to property
- Maintain good order and discipline
- Prevent criminal behaviour

As a boarding school with international students, the school recognises:

- Students may experience heightened vulnerability (distance from family, cultural differences, language barriers)
- Boarding staff have extended duty of care (24/7 supervision)
- Incidents may occur in less structured environments (evenings, weekends, dormitories)

Therefore:

- A pastoral, trauma-informed approach is prioritised

- Cultural sensitivity and communication needs are explicitly considered
- Wherever possible, staff known and trusted by students take the lead in de-escalation

Definitions

Reasonable Force

Physical contact used to control or restrain a student, which is:

- Necessary
- Proportionate
- The minimum required

Restrictive Intervention

Any intervention that restricts a student's movement, liberty or freedom to act independently (physical or non-physical).

Restraint

A type of restrictive intervention involving direct physical contact to prevent movement.

Seclusion

Seclusion is the supervised confinement and isolation of a student, away from other students, where the student is prevented from leaving the area of their own free will.

Key Principles

The following principles underpin all practice:

- **Last resort:** Restrictive interventions are used only when necessary
- **Proportionality:** The least restrictive option is used for the shortest time
- **Prevention-first approach:** De-escalation is prioritised
- **Safeguarding focus:** The safety of students and staff is paramount
- **Dignity and respect:** Students are treated with care throughout

The use of force must never be used as punishment.

Prevention and De-escalation

The school will:

- Promote a positive behaviour culture
- Use behaviour support plans for identified students
- Train staff in de-escalation techniques

- Identify triggers and early warning signs
- Provide appropriate SEN and pastoral support

The school will actively minimise risk through:

- Strong relationships between staff and students
- Clear behaviour expectations and routines (including boarding routines)
- Individual Behaviour Plans and risk assessments
- Access to pastoral, safeguarding and mental health support

The guidance emphasises proactive steps to minimise the need for intervention.

When Restrictive Intervention May Be Used

In accordance with Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, all members of school staff have the lawful power to use reasonable force. Other persons authorised by the Headteacher may also exercise this power where appropriate.

Staff may use reasonable force or restrictive interventions when:

- A student is at immediate risk of harm
- There is a risk of serious disruption
- Property damage is likely to occur
- Other strategies have failed or are inappropriate

In a boarding context, this may include:

- Night-time incidents or safeguarding crises
- Substance misuse situations
- Emotional distress or mental health episodes

All decisions must be dynamic, situation-specific and justified.

Unacceptable Practice

The following are not permitted:

- Use of force as punishment
- Excessive or disproportionate force
- Interventions that cause pain or humiliation
- Unsafe holds
- Practices that restrict breathing or circulation
- Denial of basic needs

Staff must not:

- apply pressure to the neck, throat, chest, lungs or abdomen;
- obstruct breathing or communication;
- hold a student face down;
- use techniques likely to cause pain;
- employ any intervention that creates a foreseeable risk of positional asphyxia.

Students with SEND and Additional needs

The school recognises increased vulnerability among students with:

- SEND
- Mental health difficulties
- Trauma backgrounds
- Cultural or language barriers

The school will:

- Use individual risk assessments and plans
- Make reasonable adjustments
- Involve external specialists where required
- Ensure boarding staff are aware of individual needs and all staff are appropriately trained

Recording and Reporting

Statutory Requirement

From April 2026, schools must record and report each significant incident involving the use of force.

Recording

Records must be:

- Completed as soon as possible (ideally the same day)
- Accurate and factual

Records will include:

- Students and staff involved
- Date, time and location
- Reason for intervention
- De-escalation attempts
- Type of intervention used

- Any injuries
- Follow-up actions

Reporting

Parents/carers will normally be informed on the same day as the incident, or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter, in accordance with statutory recording and reporting requirements. A written record of such communication will be maintained. Parents/carers must be informed of significant incidents involving:

- Use of force
- Restraint
- Seclusion

This is a legal requirement introduced in recent regulations.

Post-Incident Support

Following any incident:

- Students receive appropriate emotional support
- Staff are debriefed and supported
- Incidents are reviewed for learning
- Risk assessments are updated

Boarding Reporting

- Incidents in the boarding house must also be recorded in **boarding logs**.
- Communication with DSL is mandatory
- Boarding staff must follow clear procedures for accessing senior safeguarding advice outside normal school hours.

Staff Training

The school will ensure that:

- Staff receive regular training in behaviour management and de-escalation
- Identified staff are trained in safe intervention techniques
- All staff understand this policy and their responsibilities, recording and reporting requirements.

Monitoring and Governance

The governing body will:

- Monitor data on restrictive interventions
- Review patterns and trends

- Ensure compliance with statutory duties

The school will use data to reduce future incidents and improve practice. Significant incidents must be reviewed by a member of SLT and/or the DSL within 24 hours or on the next working day.

Monitoring will include consideration of SEND, safeguarding vulnerability, age, sex, ethnicity and other protected characteristics to identify any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions.

Complaints and Allegations

Any concerns about the use of force will be:

- Taken seriously
- Investigated in line with safeguarding and complaints procedures
- Managed in accordance with staff conduct and disciplinary policies

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or in line with updated national guidance.

Appendix 1 Restrictive Intervention Incident Record

Section 1: Student and Incident Details

Student Name:	
Date of Birth/Age:	
Year Group/ Accommodation	
SEND/Additional Needs	
Known triggers/Risk factors	
Date and time of incident	
Location	
Type of Session (lesson/boarding/trip/unstructured time)	

Section 2: Staff Involved

- **Lead Staff Member:**
- **Other Staff Involved:**
- **Witnesses:**

Section 3: Context and Antecedents

Description of events leading up to the behaviour

Any known triggers (emotional, environmental, peer conflict, cultural factors, fatigue, etc.)

Behaviour displayed by student

Section 4: De-escalation Strategies Used

Tick / describe:

- ☐ Verbal reassurance

- ☐ Distraction / redirection
- ☐ Time/space offered
- ☐ Removal of audience / peers
- ☐ Known calming strategies
- ☐ Involvement of trusted adult
- ☐ Other (specify):

Outcome of de-escalation attempts:

Section 5: Reason for Restrictive Intervention

- ☐ Risk of injury to self
- ☐ Risk of injury to others
- ☐ Risk of serious damage to property
- ☐ Serious disruption affecting safety
- ☐ Other (specify):

Explanation (include why this was necessary and proportionate):

Section 6: Type of Intervention Used

- ☐ Reasonable force (physical contact)
- ☐ Physical restraint
- ☐ non-physical restriction
- ☐ Seclusion

Description of intervention:

(What exactly was done, how long it lasted, position/hold if applicable)

Start time:

End time:

Duration:

Section 7: Outcome and Impact

How did the incident end?

Student response after incident

Any distress or escalation observed

Section 8: Injuries / Medical Attention

Student injuries: (if yes, details + action taken)

Staff injuries: (if yes, details + action taken)

First aid required: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Medical follow-up required: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Section 9: Safeguarding Considerations

Any safeguarding concerns arising? ☐ Yes ☐ No

DSL informed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Further action required?

Section 10: Post-Incident Actions

- ☐ Student debrief completed
- ☐ Staff debrief completed
- ☐ Parents/carers informed (required)
- ☐ Behaviour / risk plan reviewed
- ☐ Sanctions applied (if appropriate, not linked to use of force)

Details of parental communication (date/time/method):

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Section 11: Reflection and Review

(Required to reduce future incidents)

What worked well?

What could be improved?

Section 12: Authorisation

- **Completed by:**
- **Role:**
- **Date completed:**
- **Reviewed by (SLT/DSL):**
- **Date reviewed:**



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