Policy and Procedure

Restrictive Interventions and Use of Reasonable Force

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Trust Board

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Key Requirements from 1 April 2026

- Significant use of force, seclusion and restraint must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable, normally the same day.
- Parents must be informed in writing as soon as practicable, with the same-day expectation still the norm.
- Definitions now need to cover restraint, seclusion and significant incidents more clearly to support lawful practice and accurate recording.
- Unsafe restraint and punitive force are prohibited.
- Incidents must be reviewed, learned from and used to improve support plans, training and oversight.

Decision-Making Test

Before using a restrictive intervention, staff should ask:

Necessary?	Proportionate?	Welfare?
• Is there a safer, less restrictive option? • Will this reduce risk rather than escalate it? • Have I checked the wider environment and available support?	• Am I using the least restrictive response for the least time? • Have I considered age, size, SEND, medical needs and equality implications? • If the response is escalating the situation, should I change approach?	• How will this affect the pupil's dignity and wellbeing? • Can I explain clearly what is happening? • Should the intervention now be reduced or stopped?

Contents

1 Purpose of this Policy 4

2 Scope 4

3 Legal and policy Framework 4

4 Trust Principles 4

5 Definitions 5

6 Lawful Use of Reasonable Force and other Physical Contact 5

7 Determining Whether a Restrictive Intervention is Appropriate 6

7.1 Necessity 6

7.2 Proportionality 6

7.3 Pupil welfare 6

8 Prevention, De-escalation and Behaviour Support 7

9 Pupils with SEND and Other Vulnerabilities 7

10 Seclusion 8

11 Recording and Reporting Duties 8

11.1 Minimum written record for significant use of force 8

11.2 Reporting significant use of force to parents 8

11.3 Recording and informing parents about seclusion and restraint 9

12 Post-Incident Support, Review and Learning 9

13 Training 10

14 Governance, Oversight and Communication 10

15 Complaints, Allegations and Staff Support 10

16 Review and Linked Documents 11

Appendix A

Policy on a Page 12

1. Purpose of this Policy

This policy sets out BCWCAT's expectations for preventing, using, recording, reporting and reviewing restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, in its schools.

It reflects the Department for Education guidance *Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools, effective from 1 April 2026*, together with the related statutory duties on recording and reporting significant use of force, seclusion and restraint.

The Trust's position is clear. Restrictive interventions should be minimised through strong relationships, early support, prevention and de-escalation. Where they are used, they must be lawful, necessary, proportionate, time-limited and consistent with the pupil's dignity, welfare and safety.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all BCWCAT schools, including primary and secondary, and to the Trust Central Team where relevant.

It applies to all members of school staff and to other adults working with pupils under the direction of the Headteacher, including support staff, agency and temporary staff and volunteers.

This policy should be read alongside each school's behaviour policy, safeguarding arrangements, SEND arrangements, health and safety procedures and complaints procedure.

3. Legal and Policy Framework

School staff have a legal power, not a duty, to use reasonable force in limited circumstances. BCWCAT schools must also comply with the statutory duties that now apply to recording and reporting significant use of force, seclusion and restraint.

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, including sections 93 and 93A
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- DfE: *Restrictive interventions and the use of reasonable force in schools* (2026)
- DfE: *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (current version)

For BCWCAT academies, proprietor responsibilities sit with the Trust Board. Staff acting lawfully, reasonably and in line with this policy are entitled to the Trust's support.

4. Trust Principles

All BCWCAT schools must ensure that:

- restrictive interventions are used only as a last resort
- force is never used as a punishment
- the least restrictive option is chosen and used for the shortest time necessary
- decisions are based on necessity, proportionality and the pupil's welfare

- pupils' dignity, safety and wellbeing are protected throughout
- particular care is taken where pupils have SEND, medical needs, communication differences or other vulnerabilities
- incidents are recorded, reported, reviewed and learned from properly
- parents are informed promptly in line with the law and this policy
- leaders monitor patterns, repeat incidents and disproportionality and act on what the data shows

5. Definitions

The following definitions are used to support consistent understanding, decision-making and recording. They do not imply that all methods are acceptable or endorsed.

Restrictive intervention
A measure used to prevent, restrict or subdue the movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This includes physical and non-physical methods.

Reasonable force
A term used in legislation which includes physical restrictive interventions. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time required in the circumstances.

Restraint
A non-disciplinary restrictive intervention that immobilises or restricts a pupil's movement, with or without direct physical contact.

Seclusion
A non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and preventing them from leaving, whether by physical obstruction, blocking or making the pupil believe there will be adverse consequences if they leave.

Significant incident
An incident where the use of force goes beyond ordinary appropriate physical contact between staff and pupils. This includes situations where physical force is used to carry out a non-physical restrictive intervention.

Appropriate physical contact
Ordinary, non-restrictive contact that is proper in the circumstances, such as first aid, guiding or escorting a pupil, comforting a distressed pupil, congratulating a pupil, or demonstrating a skill or technique.

6. Lawful Use of Reasonable Force and other Physical Contact

All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances. Reasonable force may be used only to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- injuring themselves or others
- committing a criminal offence
- damaging property
- causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a lesson or otherwise

Where separate searching legislation and guidance apply, authorised staff may also use reasonable force when carrying out a lawful search of a pupil or their possessions.

BCWCAT schools must not operate a no contact policy. There will be times when appropriate physical contact with pupils is proper and necessary. Equally, schools must not agree blanket requests from parents, carers or staff that reasonable force or other restrictive interventions will never be used if a lawful intervention may be needed to protect a pupil or others.

Force must never be used for the purpose of punishment.

Unsafe restraint is prohibited. Pupils must not be restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation. This includes covering the mouth or nose, or applying pressure to the neck or abdomen. Ground restraint carries particular risk and must be avoided. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff must release or reposition to a safer alternative as quickly as possible. Where appropriate, the pupil must receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injury as soon as possible.

7. Determining Whether a Restrictive Intervention is Appropriate

The decision about whether to use a restrictive intervention depends on the circumstances of the moment. Staff may at times need to make rapid decisions, but, wherever possible, they must consider necessity, proportionality and the pupil's welfare before acting and while the intervention is ongoing.

7.1 Necessity

- Consider whether there is a more effective and less restrictive way of managing the situation.
- Consider whether the intervention is likely to reduce the relevant risk or whether it may escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself.
- Where possible, communicate with other staff to understand the wider environment and what support is available.

7.2 Proportionality

- Use the least restrictive intervention, or the least amount of force, for the least amount of time necessary.
- If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, reconsider the approach and attempt an alternative strategy where safe to do so.
- Take account of the pupil's age, size, medical needs, SEND, communication needs, trauma history and any other relevant vulnerabilities or equality implications.

7.3 Pupil welfare

- Consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare and dignity, including the location and whether peers are present.
- Where possible, explain clearly and calmly what is happening, why it is happening and what the pupil needs to do.
- Use verbal and non-verbal strategies suitable to the pupil's communication needs and allow time for processing.
- Keep the intervention under constant review and reduce or stop it as soon as it is safe to do so.

This is not an exhaustive list. Staff must also take account of any other relevant factor in the circumstances.

8. Prevention, De-escalation and Behaviour Support

BCWCAT schools must make minimising the need for restrictive interventions part of their everyday culture and practice. Whole-school measures should include:

- a positive, inclusive behaviour culture with clear expectations and consistent routines
- staff confidence in de-escalation, communication strategies and trauma-informed practice
- consideration of classroom and wider environmental factors such as noise, crowding, transitions and sensory demands
- giving pupils time, space and strategies to regulate before behaviour escalates
- strong staff-pupil relationships, restorative work and effective pastoral support
- regular analysis of behaviour and restrictive intervention data to identify patterns and improve practice

Where a pupil is identified as being at increased risk of escalation, schools must consider tailored individual approaches. These may include:

- a behaviour support plan or equivalent document developed with the pupil, parents or carers and relevant professionals where appropriate
- clear identification of warning signs, triggers, communication preferences and agreed de-escalation strategies
- reasonable adjustments and environmental changes
- a risk assessment where there is an identified increased likelihood that reasonable force or another restrictive intervention may be required
- regular review of plans following any significant incident and at other planned points

The fact that a restrictive intervention is referenced in a behaviour support plan does not make its use automatic. Staff must still judge whether its use is lawful, necessary and proportionate in the circumstances at the time.

9. Pupils with SEND and Other Vulnerabilities

Some pupils with SEND, medical needs, communication differences or other vulnerabilities may react to distressing or confusing situations in ways that present risk to themselves or others. Schools must seek to understand the underlying reasons for the behaviour so that proactive support can be put in place.

Common triggers may include pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar environments, fear, anxiety, frustration or an inability to communicate need or discomfort. Pupils who are non-verbal, who find verbal communication difficult, or who use English as an additional language may need different approaches to ensure they understand what is happening and can respond.

Schools must use staff who know the pupil well to help identify risks and likely trigger points, and should work with the pupil, parents or carers and relevant professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

Where appropriate, behaviour support plans must set out adjustments needed to help the pupil participate safely in school, how the pupil communicates effectively, and any clearly defined circumstances in which increased physical contact may be appropriate. Parameters around any such contact must be stated clearly.

Schools must review whether pupils with SEND, pupils who share protected characteristics, or other vulnerable groups are being disproportionately subject to restrictive interventions and take action where concerns are identified.

10. Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention and must be used only as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation.

- Seclusion must never be used as a punishment or implemented through threat of punishment.
- The space used must be safe, suitable and not feel threatening or intimidating.
- The pupil must be supervised at all times throughout the period of seclusion.
- The pupil must be allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced.
- Every incident of seclusion must be recorded and parents informed in line with section 11 of this policy.

Seclusion as defined in this policy is distinct from other lawful behaviour responses, such as supervised removal in line with the school behaviour policy.

11. Recording and Reporting Duties

Each BCWCAT school must maintain clear written procedures for recording and reporting:

- each significant incident involving the use of force
- each incident of seclusion
- each incident of restraint, including restraint without direct physical contact

Records must be made in writing as soon as practicable after the event by the staff member or members involved, and schools should endeavour to complete them no later than the same day. These duties apply even where restrictive interventions are referred to in a pupil's behaviour support plan.

11.1 Minimum written record for significant use of force

- names of the pupil and staff directly involved
- relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil has an identified special educational need or disability
- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- a brief factual account of the incident, including what led up to it, any known or likely triggers, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used, and, where relevant, the type and degree of force applied and any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance
- details of any post-incident support, including medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

11.2 Reporting significant use of force to parents

Parents must be informed in writing as soon as practicable after each significant use of force, and schools should endeavour to do this no later than the same day.

For these reporting duties, parent includes a person with parental responsibility and, where relevant, a local authority accommodating the child under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

The written report to parents must include, as a minimum:

- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- a brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary
- a brief account of the type of force applied and the degree of force
- details of any physical injuries sustained, where applicable

The duty to report does not apply where the pupil is aged 20 or over, or where informing a particular parent would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. In that circumstance, the school must report the incident to any parent to whom it can safely be reported or, if there is no such parent, to the local authority in whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident.

Where appropriate, parents should be offered a follow-up discussion so that triggers, de-escalation strategies, support plans and any future changes can be discussed.

11.3 Recording and informing parents about seclusion and restraint

Every incident of seclusion or restraint must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable. Restraint may occur with or without direct physical contact. For example, removing a walking aid may amount to restraint and must be recorded accordingly.

The written record for seclusion or restraint must include, as a minimum:

- names of the pupil and staff directly involved
- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil has an identified special educational need or disability and, where applicable, the SEN status code
- a brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary
- details of any physical injuries sustained, where applicable
- details of any post-incident support, including medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

Parents must be informed in writing as soon as practicable after each incident of seclusion or restraint, and schools should endeavour to do this no later than the same day. Schools must provide the written record or written information about the incident in the form required by law for the school type concerned.

The same limited exceptions apply as for reporting significant use of force. Where a restraint incident also amounts to a significant use of force, schools do not need to report the same information twice; the significant use of force reporting route is sufficient.

12. Post-Incident Support, Review and Learning

Schools must evaluate all incidents involving restrictive intervention as soon as practicable after the event. The review should consider why the intervention was used, its impact on pupils and staff, whether any patterns or trends are emerging and what could reduce the likelihood of future incidents.

Where appropriate, the pupil and staff member involved must receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. Injuries must also be recorded and reported under the school's health and safety procedures and to the Health and Safety Executive where required.

Schools should hold a follow-up conversation or debrief to support reflection, learning and wellbeing. This should, where possible, include separate reflection from the pupil and staff involved, and should seek to repair and rebuild relationships. Ideally it should be facilitated by a member of staff who was not involved in the incident.

Schools must also consider the wellbeing of pupils who witnessed a distressing incident and provide support where needed. Follow-up support may include further conversations, pastoral support, counselling or changes to behaviour support plans and risk assessments.

13. Training

All staff must receive clear guidance on this policy and their responsibilities within it.

This includes awareness of:

- the legal framework and the limits on the use of force
- prevention, de-escalation and communication strategies
- appropriate physical contact and prohibited restraint practices
- recording, reporting and post-incident review duties
- the additional considerations that apply where pupils have SEND or other vulnerabilities

Staff who are more likely to need to use reasonable force or other restrictive interventions must receive appropriate practical training and refreshers matched to their role and context. School leaders must decide what formal training is needed by reference to pupil need, risk assessments, staffing arrangements and the principles set out in current DfE guidance.

School leaders must ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that staff who regularly work with pupils where restrictive interventions may be required can do so safely.

14. Governance, Oversight and Communication

The Trust Board, through its committee arrangements, and school leaders must take all reasonable steps to ensure that this policy and the related procedures are implemented properly.

- ensure compliant school procedures and templates are in place
- make this policy available to staff, pupils and parents
- review records and data regularly to identify repeat incidents, triggers, training needs and areas for improvement
- monitor whether restrictive interventions are being used disproportionately in relation to pupils with SEND, pupils who share protected characteristics, or other vulnerable groups
- use the evidence from incidents to improve policy, practice, staff development and pupil support plans

15. Complaints, Allegations and Staff Support

Any complaint regarding the use of restrictive interventions must be dealt with through the school's normal complaints procedure.

Any allegation of inappropriate use of force or other restrictive intervention against a member of staff must be managed in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education and the Trust's safeguarding and HR procedures. This includes the provisions relating to suspension.

The Trust will support staff who have acted lawfully, reasonably and in accordance with this policy.

16. Review and Linked Documents

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where legislation, guidance or Trust arrangements change.

It should be read alongside the latest versions of the following documents as applicable:

Guidance effective from 1 April 2026

- *Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools* – Guidance for schools in England (DfE, April 2026)
  https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6943dad6501cdd438f4cf5aa/Restrictive_interventions_including_use_of_reasonable_force_in_schools.pdf

Related statutory and non-statutory guidance

- *Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025*
  The Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- *Behaviour in Schools – Advice for headteachers and school staff*
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-in-schools--2
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education*
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2
- *Equality Act 2010: Advice for schools*
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools
- *Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools*
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation
- *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools*
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2

- BCWCAT Behaviour, Safeguarding, SEND, Complaints and Health and Safety procedures

Appendix A

Blessed Christopher Wharton
CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

Policy on a Page

RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS AND USE OF REASONABLE FORCE

This summary gives a quick-reference overview of the Trust's **Restrictive Interventions and Use of Reasonable Force Policy**.

It explains when staff may lawfully use reasonable force and other restrictive interventions, the priority given to prevention and de-escalation, and the statutory recording and reporting duties now in force.

The policy reflects Department for Education guidance effective from **1 April 2026** and sits within the Trust's wider safeguarding, behaviour and health and safety framework.

Key Action Points

1. Use Restrictive Interventions Only Where Necessary

Restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, may only be used to prevent injury, serious disorder, serious damage to property or the commission of a criminal offence.
Force must never be used as a punishment and must always be **necessary, proportionate, time-limited, based on the pupil's welfare and the least restrictive option available**.

2. Prioritise Prevention and De-escalation

Schools must embed prevention, early intervention and de-escalation in daily practice. This includes consistent behaviour management, positive relationships, trauma-informed approaches and environmental adjustments that reduce the risk of escalation.

3. Put Whole-School and Individual Measures in Place

Each school must clearly set out:

- Whole-school measures to minimise the need for restrictive interventions
- Tailored individual approaches, including behaviour support plans and risk assessments where appropriate

Plans should be developed collaboratively, include reasonable adjustments, set out agreed strategies and triggers, be understood by relevant staff and be reviewed regularly and after any significant incident.

4. Take Particular Care with Pupils with SEND

Schools must consider pupils' individual needs, communication styles, triggers and vulnerabilities. Reasonable adjustments must be made, and staff should be aware of agreed strategies and support arrangements for pupils with SEND or other additional needs.

5. Record and Report Incidents Properly

From 1 April 2026, schools have a **statutory duty** to:

- Record all significant incidents involving reasonable force
- Record all incidents of seclusion and restraint, including non-contact restraint
- Report incidents to parents/carers in writing as soon as practicable, normally the same day

These duties apply even where the use of force is referenced within a behaviour support plan.

6. Ensure Staff Are Trained and Supported

All staff must understand this policy, prevention and de-escalation, and the school's recording and reporting procedure. Staff more likely to use restrictive interventions must receive appropriate training. Unsafe restraint is prohibited. Staff who act lawfully and in line with this policy will be supported by the Trust.

For full details, schools should refer to the BCWCAT Restrictive Interventions and Use of Reasonable Force Policy and associated statutory guidance.