



Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools

Policy Leader / DSL / EHT*	<p>Susan Conron, Executive Headteacher Natalie Sinclair, Head of School & SENDCO (HF) Louise Phillips Head of School & SENDCO (DS)</p>
Last Updated	<p>New Policy guidance from DfE Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools Guidance for schools in England April 2026</p> <p>March 2026</p>
To be taken to staff meeting	11.03.26

Introduction

The **Federation of Duke Street and Highfield Nursery Schools** believes that all members of our communities have the right to a safe and positive educational environment where children can learn and thrive free from disruption, violence, discrimination, bullying and abuse.

As **maintained nursery schools**, we recognise that young children are still developing their ability to regulate emotions, communicate their needs and understand expectations. Adults therefore play a vital role in supporting children through **secure relationships, co-regulation and developmentally appropriate guidance**.

This policy sets out our approach to **restrictive interventions**, including the use of **reasonable force, restraint and seclusion**.

The **Federation of Duke Street and Highfield Nursery Schools** recognises that restrictive interventions can have a significant **physical and psychological impact on children and staff**. For very young children in maintained nursery schools, such interventions can be particularly distressing and confusing. Restrictive interventions should therefore **only ever be used as a last resort**, when necessary, proportionate and lawful, and where less restrictive measures have been attempted or assessed as inappropriate in the circumstances.

The Federation of Duke Street and Highfield Nursery Schools is committed to:

- safeguarding the **welfare, dignity and rights** of all children and staff
- recognising the **developmental needs of children aged 6 months–5 years** within nursery provision
- preventing and minimising the need for restrictive interventions
- supporting staff in meeting the needs of all children
- working in partnership with **families and external agencies**
- working at a threshold above compliance and exceeding statutory duties
- using data and reflective practice to improve practice continuously

Throughout this document we have used the term **‘families’** to refer to pupils’ parents, carers or those who hold parental responsibility (PR), including the Corporate Parent where this applies.

Legal Framework

The principal legislation and guidance to which this policy relates are:

- Education Act 2011
- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (especially sections 93 and 93A)
- Schools Regulations 2025 (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No.2) (England)
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

- Children Act 1989
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010

Department for Education guidance:

- **Restrictive Interventions, including Use of Reasonable Force in Schools: Guidance for Schools in England (April 2026)**
- Behaviour in Schools: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff (2024)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Guidance for Safer Working Practice (2022)

This policy also reflects the principles of the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)** which require practitioners in **maintained nursery schools** to support children's personal, social and emotional development and manage behaviour in ways that are appropriate to children's age and stage of development.

Definitions

This policy uses the following definitions:

Restrictive intervention

A restrictive intervention is any action that **prevents, restricts or subdues movement of the body, or part of the body, of a child.**

The term **restrictive intervention** is used as an umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed at restricting children in different ways.

In maintained nursery schools, restrictive interventions may sometimes occur where a young child's behaviour places themselves or others at **immediate risk of harm** and adult intervention is required to keep everyone safe.

Reasonable force

Reasonable force is a legal 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.

Reasonable means **using no more force than is necessary and for the least amount of time possible**, taking into account the specific circumstances and the **age, size and developmental stage of the child.**

Seclusion

Seclusion is a **non-disciplinary intervention** involving keeping a child 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

Restraint refers to a **non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a child or limits their movement.**

This may or may not include direct physical contact.

For example, holding a child's arms to prevent them hitting others or removing an object that may cause harm may both be considered forms of restraint.

The **Federation of Duke Street and Highfield Nursery Schools** recognises that all incidents meeting any of the definitions above are **significant incidents.**

Other Physical Contact with Reasonable Force Policy , the Children

The **Federation of Duke Street and Highfield Nursery Schools** does **not** implement a 'no contact' policy.

Within **maintained nursery schools**, appropriate physical contact is often **necessary, supportive and part of good professional practice.** Young children frequently require assistance for safety, care and emotional reassurance.

Examples of occasions when physical contact is generally appropriate include:

- administering **first aid**
- guiding or escorting children safely around the nursery school
- holding a child's hand when walking together or on educational visits
- supporting a child to access a quiet space to regulate
- comforting a distressed child
- congratulating or praising a child (for example a high-five or pat on the back)
- supporting children with personal care where appropriate
- demonstrating activities or supporting children to use equipment safely

When assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in a given situation, adults should consider:

- all relevant school policies including the **Staff Code of Conduct**
- the **context of the situation**
- the **child's age and developmental stage**
- any additional vulnerabilities such as **SEND or trauma**
- whether other non-physical strategies could be used

Use of Safety Equipment and Supportive Seating

The **Federation of Duke Street and Highfield Nursery Schools** recognises that some children attending our maintained nursery schools may have **complex medical, developmental, sensory or physical needs** which require the use of **specialist equipment to support their safety and wellbeing**.

This may include, but is not limited to:

- supportive seating with straps or harnesses
- adapted chairs designed to provide **postural support**
- specialist seating recommended by therapists
- buggies or pushchairs with safety harnesses used during outings or transport within the setting
- wheelchairs or mobility equipment with harness systems

In these circumstances, straps or harnesses are used as **safety or postural support equipment**, rather than as a means of restricting a child's movement or managing behaviour.

However, the Federation recognises that **any equipment which limits a child's freedom of movement may be considered a restrictive intervention if used inappropriately**. Therefore, the use of such equipment must always be **carefully assessed, justified and monitored**.

Distinguishing Safety Equipment from Restrictive Intervention

The key consideration is **the purpose of the equipment**.

Safety equipment is appropriate where the straps or harness:

- provide **postural stability or physical support**
- prevent a child from **falling due to poor balance, muscle tone or coordination**
- support children with **medical, neurological or physical conditions**
- are part of **specialist seating or mobility equipment**

In these circumstances the straps function similarly to:

- a **wheelchair harness**
- a **high-chair safety strap**
- **postural support equipment**

This is different from using straps to:

- stop a child leaving a chair
- enforce participation in an activity
- manage behaviour
- compensate for insufficient staffing

Such uses would likely be considered **restrictive practice and would not be acceptable**.

Individual Risk Assessment

Where supportive seating or equipment with straps is used, the Federation will ensure that:

- a **written individual risk assessment** is completed
- the **specific risk to the child without the equipment is clearly identified**
- the equipment is shown to **reduce risk rather than simply manage behaviour**
- the intervention is the **least restrictive option available**

Risk assessments should consider:

- the child's **physical safety and postural needs**
- medical or therapeutic advice where available
- the child's **stage of development**
- any **sensory or communication needs**
- the **length of time the equipment is used**

This approach ensures the equipment is used **in the child's best interests and proportionate to the identified risk**.

Partnership with Families and Professionals

Where specialist seating or equipment is required:

- families will be **informed and involved in decision making**
- use of the equipment will be recorded within the child's **SEND support plan, regulation plan or individual risk assessment**
- advice will be sought from **relevant professionals where appropriate**, such as:
 - occupational therapists
 - physiotherapists
 - paediatric services
 - SEND advisory teams

This collaborative approach ensures decisions are **transparent, child-centred and evidence informed**.

Safe Use and Monitoring

Where supportive seating or equipment with straps is used, staff must ensure:

- the child is **actively supervised at all times**
- straps or harnesses are used **only when necessary for the activity**
- equipment is removed **as soon as it is no longer required**
- the child's **comfort, dignity and wellbeing are maintained**

- use of the equipment is **reviewed regularly** as the child develops

If at any point the equipment appears to cause distress, discomfort or increased risk, staff must **review the arrangement immediately** and seek guidance from senior leaders.

Reflective Practice and Review

The Federation of Duke Street and Highfield Nursery Schools recognises that children's needs change over time. The use of supportive seating or safety equipment will therefore be **reviewed regularly as part of the child's SEND support and safeguarding monitoring processes.**

Reviews will consider:

- whether the equipment is **still required**
- whether **less restrictive alternatives** are now possible
- whether further professional advice is needed
- whether staff require **additional training or guidance**

Recording and Reporting

The **Federation of Duke Street and Highfield Nursery Schools** recognises that incidents involving restrictive interventions are **significant incidents** and must be carefully recorded and reviewed.

Immediately following a significant incident, staff should **inform a senior leader** so that appropriate support can be provided.

All significant incidents involving:

- use of reasonable force
- seclusion
- non-force related restraint

It must be **recorded in writing as soon as practicable after the event**, and wherever possible on the **same day**.

Templates for recording events are included in this policy and they include :

- date, time, location and duration of the incident
- names of staff and children involved
- description of the incident and events leading up to it
- de-escalation strategies attempted prior to the intervention
- type of restrictive intervention used and rationale
- description of the degree of force used
- details of any injuries or medical checks required
- post-incident support provided
- communication with families

All records of events will be uploaded to CPOMS within 48 hours of the event. In future the whole incident will be recorded digitally via CPOMS, we are awaiting instruction from further training as how to do that, so in the interim we will upload completed forms. CPOMS allows school leaders to **monitor patterns, identify triggers and review preventative strategies** to reduce the likelihood of future incidents.

Families will be informed of significant incidents in writing and, where appropriate, invited to discuss the incident and any support strategies for their child.

All records will be maintained in line with **safeguarding and data protection requirements**.

DRAFT