

St. Luke's C of E (Aided) Primary School



Restrictive Practice and Physical Intervention Policy (Use of Reasonable Force)

2026-27

Adapted from Nottinghamshire County Council's September 2024 template
and updated for the national guidance effective from 1 April 2026

1. Introduction and purpose

This policy sets out St. Luke's arrangements for restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, restraint and seclusion. It is intended to support pupils who have reached a point of crisis or dysregulation where there is a risk of harm, while ensuring that staff understand the legal framework, the importance of prevention and de-escalation, and the school's recording and reporting duties.

St. Luke's is committed to reducing the need for restrictive interventions. They are not a routine behaviour-management strategy and will never be used as punishment. Where an intervention is necessary, staff will use no more force than is reasonable, for the shortest time necessary, and will return to less restrictive approaches as soon as it is safe to do so.

This policy should be read alongside the school's Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, SEND Policy, Equality Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Complaints Policy and Staff Code of Conduct.

2. Current legal and guidance framework

This policy has been updated for September 2026 and has regard to:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, including sections 93 and 93A;
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025;
- Department for Education: Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools, effective from 1 April 2026;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, current statutory guidance;
- Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years;
- Behaviour in Schools guidance;
- relevant Nottinghamshire safeguarding, behaviour and health and safety procedures.

The Department for Education's 2026 guidance replaced the previous 2013 Use of reasonable force in schools guidance. The school will review this policy if national or local guidance changes.

3. Terminology

Restrictive intervention is used as an umbrella term for physical and non-physical actions that prevent, restrict or subdue the movement of a pupil's body, or part of their body.

Reasonable force means using no more force than is necessary in the circumstances. It may range from guiding a pupil to safety through to physical restraint where this is necessary to prevent harm, an offence, serious damage to property or serious disorder.

Restraint is an intervention that restricts a pupil's movement or liberty. It may involve direct physical contact, but restraint can also occur without direct physical contact.

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention in which a pupil is kept in a place away from others and prevented from leaving, whether by physical obstruction, blocking or by making the pupil believe they will be punished if they leave. Seclusion is distinct from a disciplinary removal from a classroom.

Other physical contact, such as comforting a distressed child, providing first aid, supporting a child with personal care, demonstrating a technique in PE, or guiding a child in an ordinary and non-restrictive way, is not automatically a restrictive intervention.

4. Our approach to prevention and de-escalation

St. Luke's aims to minimise restrictive intervention through strong relationships, explicit behaviour teaching, consistent routines, reasonable adjustments, responsive support and early de-escalation. Staff will seek to understand what may be driving a pupil's behaviour and will consider communication needs, SEND, disability, safeguarding factors, trauma or other vulnerabilities where relevant.

Preventative and de-escalation approaches may include:

- calm, clear and non-threatening communication;
- giving a pupil time, space and an appropriate route out of a situation;
- reducing demands or environmental triggers where appropriate;
- using familiar regulation strategies, including those identified in an individual plan;
- seeking additional adult support;
- using distraction, redirection or a change of adult where helpful;
- making reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND or disabilities;
- working with parents/carers and relevant professionals where patterns of need emerge.

The school does not operate a 'no contact' policy. Such a policy could prevent staff from acting appropriately to protect a pupil or others. Staff are expected to use professional judgement and act lawfully, proportionately and in the best interests of pupils.

5. When reasonable force may be used

Under section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in specified circumstances. At St. Luke's this includes teachers and other members of staff who have lawful charge or responsibility for pupils. The Headteacher may also authorise other people temporarily in charge of pupils where appropriate.

Reasonable force may be used where necessary to prevent a pupil from:

- committing an offence;
- causing personal injury to themselves or another person;
- causing damage to property;
- prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among pupils receiving education at the school.

The decision to use force is a matter of professional judgement in the circumstances. Staff should consider the seriousness and immediacy of the risk, the likelihood of achieving a safe outcome without physical intervention, the pupil's age and development, any SEND or disability, known vulnerabilities, and any relevant individual support or safety plan.

Where practicable, staff should seek assistance before a restrictive physical intervention. However, an emergency may require a member of staff to act immediately to prevent serious harm. The fact that another adult is not present does not remove the power or duty to act where immediate action is necessary.

6. Key principles when intervention is necessary

- Use the least restrictive option that is reasonably available.
- Use no more force than is necessary and for the shortest possible time.
- Continue to communicate calmly and seek to reduce restriction as soon as the risk reduces.
- Monitor the pupil for signs of physical injury, breathing difficulty or psychological distress.
- Take particular care where a pupil has SEND, a disability, a medical condition, communication needs or known trauma.
- Never use force as a punishment, to cause pain, or in a humiliating, degrading or sexually inappropriate manner.
- Avoid any intervention that restricts breathing or places pressure on the neck, chest or abdomen.
- St. Luke's does not use prone (face-down) restraint, basket holds or wraps as planned restrictive techniques.

7. Seclusion

Seclusion will only be considered as a safety measure to protect the pupil or others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. It will not be used as a punishment or disciplinary sanction.

Any place used must be safe and non-threatening. The pupil must be supervised throughout. As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil must be allowed to leave.

Every incident of seclusion must be recorded and reported in accordance with section 11 of this policy.

8. Individual planning: Personal Safety Plans

Where there is a foreseeable risk that a pupil may reach crisis and require restrictive intervention, the school will consider an individual Personal Safety Plan or equivalent behaviour support plan. This will be developed with the pupil, parents/carers and relevant professionals as appropriate.

Plans should identify known triggers, early signs of escalation, communication and regulation strategies, reasonable adjustments, preferred de-escalation approaches, risks, and any agreed response where there is an immediate danger. A plan does not provide blanket permission to use force or seclusion: staff must still judge whether any intervention is necessary and reasonable in the circumstances.

Plans will be reviewed after significant incidents and when the pupil's needs or circumstances change.

9. Safeguarding leadership and staff training

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is Mr P. Phillips. Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads are Miss L. Tomlinson, Mr M. Bell and Miss S. Phillipson. Safeguarding remains everybody's responsibility.

All staff will receive appropriate information about behaviour support, de-escalation, safeguarding and the lawful use of reasonable force. Where a pupil's needs indicate that staff require specific physical-intervention training, the Headteacher will ensure that appropriate advice and training are obtained.

The school will seek advice from Nottinghamshire County Council's Inclusive Behaviour service where appropriate. Staff must not improvise planned restraint techniques for which they have not been trained. In an unforeseen emergency, however, staff may take reasonable and necessary action to prevent immediate harm.

10. After an incident

Following any restrictive intervention, the immediate priorities are safety, welfare and recovery. Staff will check the pupil and adults involved for injury or distress, arrange first aid or medical assistance where required, and provide appropriate emotional support.

The pupil should be given an age-appropriate opportunity to share their account and views when they are ready. Staff involved should also be given an opportunity to debrief. The school will consider what can be learned, including whether triggers, environmental factors, reasonable adjustments, staffing, de-escalation strategies or the pupil's Personal Safety Plan need to change.

Restorative conversation may be appropriate once the pupil is regulated and able to participate. It should not be used to require an immediate account from a distressed child.

11. Recording and reporting incidents

From 1 April 2026, new statutory recording and reporting duties apply. St. Luke's will comply with section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025 and the Department for Education's 2026 guidance.

Significant incidents involving the use of force

Every significant incident in which force is used must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable. Staff should endeavour to complete the record on CPOMS on the same day. The record will include, as a minimum:

- the names of the pupil and staff directly involved;
- the time, date, location and approximate duration;
- relevant needs or circumstances, including SEND/disability and SEN status where applicable;
- what led to the incident, known or potential triggers, and preventative or de-escalation strategies used;
- the type and degree of force used and why it was assessed as necessary;
- any physical injury or other adverse impact;
- post-incident support and follow-up.

Parents/carers will be informed as soon as practicable and the school will endeavour to do so on the same day. The report to parents will be provided in writing and will include the information required by statutory guidance. Where reporting to a parent would be likely to result in serious harm to the pupil, the school will follow the statutory exception and safeguarding route set out in the national guidance.

Seclusion and restraint

Every incident of seclusion or restraint must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable, whether or not it was already anticipated within a pupil's support plan. This includes restraint without direct physical contact where it meets the statutory definition.

As a maintained school, St. Luke's will supply parents/carers with a copy of the written record of a seclusion or restraint incident as soon as practicable and will endeavour to do so on the same day, subject to the statutory safeguarding exception described above.

Where a restraint incident is also a significant use-of-force incident, the school will follow the significant use-of-force reporting procedure and will not duplicate the same report unnecessarily.

12. Governing body oversight and use of data

The governing body will ensure that appropriate procedures are in place for recording and reporting the use of force, seclusion and restraint. It will take reasonable steps to assure itself that these procedures are followed.

The Headteacher and governing body will review data at appropriate intervals to identify patterns, repeated incidents, the effectiveness of preventative approaches and any disproportionate use affecting pupils with SEND, disabilities, protected characteristics or other vulnerabilities. Information will be handled in a way that respects pupil confidentiality.

The nominated governor with responsibility for behaviour is James Stout, Chair of Governors.

13. Complaints, allegations and safeguarding concerns

Pupils, parents/carers and staff have the right to raise concerns about the use of restrictive intervention. Complaints will be considered under the school's Complaints Policy, but any concern that indicates a child may have been harmed, an adult may have used excessive or inappropriate force, or an adult may have behaved in a way that meets the harm threshold will be dealt with through safeguarding procedures.

The Headteacher/DSL will consider whether advice or referral is required to Nottinghamshire's Managing Allegations Service/LADO, Children's Social Care/MASH and/or the police. Where an allegation concerns the Headteacher, it will be managed in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures and current Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance.

The existence of an allegation does not in itself mean that the use of force was unlawful. Any evaluation will take account of the circumstances, the legal power to use reasonable force and whether the intervention was necessary, reasonable and proportionate.

14. Equality, SEND and reasonable adjustments

This policy applies to all pupils. The school recognises that the impact and appropriateness of restrictive intervention may differ according to a pupil's age, development, SEND, disability, communication needs, medical needs, trauma history or other vulnerabilities.

SEND or disability does not remove the school's behaviour expectations or its duty to keep people safe. Equally, staff must consider whether a pupil's needs are relevant to the incident and whether reasonable adjustments, different communication or preventative support are required. The school will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and will monitor for disproportionate patterns in the use of restrictive interventions.

15. Monitoring and review

The Headteacher is responsible for the implementation of this policy. It will be monitored through incident review, safeguarding oversight, behaviour and SEND monitoring, staff training and governing body assurance.

This policy was updated in September 2026 to reflect the Department for Education's Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools guidance effective from 1 April 2026 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

Date approved by the Governing Body: September 2026

Date to be reviewed: September 2027, or earlier if legislation, statutory guidance or local procedures change.