



Restrictive Interventions and Use of Reasonable Force Policy

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Owner: CEO/Director of Inclusion

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Ethos Statement: Positive Behaviour, Safeguarding and the Use of Physical Intervention

The Character Education Trust is committed to creating schools in which all pupils feel safe, respected, supported, and able to thrive.

We believe that positive behaviour is best achieved through strong relationships, high expectations, consistency, and care. Our approach prioritises prevention, early intervention, and de-escalation.

Safeguarding underpins all aspects of this policy. The Trust recognises that there are circumstances in which inaction may place a child or others at risk, and therefore staff have a positive duty to intervene where harm is likely. We do not operate a “no-touch” policy. Appropriate physical contact and, where necessary, restrictive physical intervention are recognised as lawful safeguarding responses, not disciplinary tools.

Any use of physical intervention within the Trust is guided by the following commitments:

- **The safety and welfare of pupils and staff is paramount** and overrides all other considerations.
- **Physical intervention is an act of care**, used only in exceptional circumstances to prevent harm, never as punishment, intimidation, or control.
- **The least intrusive approach** will always be used, for the **shortest possible time**, and only when other strategies are insufficient.
- **Pupil dignity, rights, and emotional wellbeing** will be respected at all times, including during moments of crisis.
- **Reasonable adjustments** will be made for pupils with SEND, vulnerabilities, or trauma histories, and individual needs will inform planning and response.
- **Transparency, accountability, and reflection** are essential: incidents will be recorded, reviewed, and used to inform learning and reduce future risk.

We are committed to supporting staff to act with confidence, professionalism, and compassion, including through training, leadership oversight, and post-incident support. Where staff act in good faith, within this policy, and to protect pupils from harm, they will be supported by school leaders and the Trust.

Through this approach, the Character Education Trust seeks to ensure that positive behaviour, safeguarding, and inclusion are not competing priorities, but mutually reinforcing responsibilities, rooted in our shared commitment to the wellbeing and development of every child.

Information for Parents and Carers

At the Character Education Trust, the safety, wellbeing and dignity of every child come first. At Wrotham School and Aylesford School, we promote positive behaviour through strong relationships, clear expectations and early support.

We focus on prevention and de-escalation, recognising that behaviour is often a form of communication, particularly for children who may be anxious, distressed or have additional needs.

The Trust does not operate a “no-touch” policy. Appropriate physical contact may be necessary to keep children safe, provide reassurance, give first aid, or support pupils with additional needs.

In exceptional circumstances, staff may need to physically intervene to prevent a child from being harmed or harming others. Any physical intervention:

- is used only as a last resort,
- is reasonable, proportionate and time-limited,
- is an act of care, never a punishment.

All significant incidents are recorded, reviewed by senior leaders, and parents are informed as soon as practicable. Where additional support is needed, schools work closely with families to reduce the likelihood of future incidents.

1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 This policy sets out the lawful, safe, and proportionate use of **restrictive interventions**, including **reasonable force**, across the Character Education Trust (CET).
- 1.2 The policy applies to **all staff**, including teaching staff, support staff, leaders, peripatetic staff, and volunteers, while pupils are in the care of the Trust.
- 1.3 The purpose of this policy is to:
 - Safeguard pupils, staff, and others;
 - Clarify expectations, authority, and responsibility;
 - Ensure compliance with statutory guidance;
 - Make explicit the Trust’s position on physical contact and intervention;
 - Promote prevention, de-escalation, and learning from incidents.

2. Clear Position on Physical Contact and Intervention

2.1 No “No-Touch” Policy

The Character Education Trust **does not operate a ‘no-touch’ policy**.

A blanket prohibition on physical contact is **not supported by law or statutory guidance** and is incompatible with safeguarding duties. Appropriate physical contact is **permitted and, in some circumstances, required** where it is reasonable, proportionate, and necessary to protect a child or others from harm.

Avoiding physical contact where a child is at risk may increase danger and may constitute a **failure to safeguard**.

2.2 Positive Duty to Intervene

All staff have a **professional and safeguarding responsibility to intervene** where a pupil is at risk of:

- Harm to themselves;
- Harm to others;
- Serious damage to property where safety is compromised;
- Committing a criminal offence.

Intervention may include **physical intervention**, provided it is lawful, reasonable, proportionate, and in line with this policy.

Staff must not refrain from necessary action due to fear of misinterpretation where intervention is clearly required to prevent harm.

3. Legal Framework

This policy is informed by and complies with:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (s93–93A)
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (England) Regulations 2025
- DfE Guidance: *Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force in schools* (2026)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998

4. Definitions

Restrictive Intervention: Any action that limits a pupil's movement, liberty, or freedom to act independently.

Reasonable Force: Force that is proportionate, necessary, and no more than required to achieve a legitimate aim.

Restraint: Physical intervention that restricts movement to prevent harm.

Seclusion: Supervised confinement of a pupil away from others for safety reasons (not punishment).

Significant Incident: Any incident involving restraint or seclusion.

5. Core Principles

The Trust is committed to:

- Prevention and early intervention;
- De-escalation wherever possible;
- Use of the **least intrusive** response;
- Protection of dignity, welfare, and rights;
- Transparency, recording, and review.

Physical intervention is a **safeguarding response**, not a disciplinary sanction.

6. Prevention and De-escalation

Schools will prioritise:

- Strong behaviour culture and relationships;
- Reasonable adjustments and SEND support;
- Individual risk assessments and behaviour plans;
- Staff training in de-escalation;
- Environmental and curriculum design that reduces risk.

Restrictive intervention must never be the first response where other strategies are effective.

7. When Physical Intervention May Be Used

Staff may use reasonable force **only when necessary** to:

- Prevent injury;
- Prevent serious self-harm;
- Prevent serious damage to property where safety is at risk;
- Prevent a crime;
- Maintain good order where safety is compromised.

Force must be:

- Necessary
- Proportionate
- Time-limited
- Continuously reviewed

8. Prohibited Practices

The following are **never permitted**:

- Use of force as punishment;
- Pain-inducing techniques;
- Prone (face-down) restraint;
- Restriction of breathing or circulation;
- Degrading or humiliating practices.

9. Planned Interventions and Risk Assessment

Where foreseeable risks exist:

- A written risk assessment must be in place;
- Planned responses must be identified;
- Only trained staff may carry out planned interventions;
- Parents/carers must be informed.

Plans must be reviewed regularly and after incidents.

10. Recording and Reporting

All significant incidents must be:

- Recorded on CPOMS (see below) as soon as practicable (same day where possible);
- Include context, actions, duration, and outcomes;
- Logged centrally on CPOMS.
- Reported to parents/carers the same day where practicable;
- Reviewed by senior leaders.

11. Post-Incident Support and Review

Following an incident, schools must:

- Ensure medical attention if required;
- Offer emotional support to pupils and staff;
- Review behaviour plans and risk assessments;
- Identify learning to reduce recurrence.

12. Training and Staff Support

- Staff will receive regular training appropriate to role;
- Leaders will ensure confidence and competence.
- Staff acting in good faith and in line with this policy will be supported by the Trust.

13. Governance and Oversight

- Termly monitoring of incidents by senior leaders;
 - Annual reporting to the Trust Board /CEO
 - Policy review following statutory change or serious incident.
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APPENDIX A: Examples of Physical Interventions

This appendix provides **illustrative examples** of physical interventions and clarifies **when each may be appropriate**, aligned to Sections **2, 5, 6, 7 and 8** of this policy. It is not exhaustive and does not replace professional judgement.

Non-negotiables (applies to all intervention types):

- CET does **not** operate a *no-touch* policy (Section 2.1). Appropriate physical contact is permitted and may be necessary.
- Staff have a **positive duty to intervene** where there is a real and immediate risk of harm (Section 2.2).
- Any physical intervention must be **necessary, reasonable, proportionate, time-limited**, and the **least intrusive** option available (Sections 5–7).
- Physical intervention is a **safeguarding response**, never a punishment (Sections 5 and 8).

A1. Non-Restrictive Physical Contact (Supportive / Preventative)

Description: Physical contact that does **not restrict movement** and is part of normal, supportive school interaction.

Examples:

- Guiding a pupil with an open hand gesture or light touch to indicate direction.
- Standing between pupils to create space during a disagreement.
- Light touch to gain attention where verbal instruction has not been effective.
- Supporting a pupil who has stumbled/fallen.
- Appropriate reassurance for a distressed pupil (e.g., brief supportive contact) where this is consistent with safeguarding practice and the pupil's needs.
- Physical prompts to support pupils with SEND where this is appropriate and agreed.

When appropriate (see Sections 2, 5 and 6):

- To **prevent escalation** and maintain safety.
- When the pupil is **not resisting** and the contact is brief, respectful and minimal.
- To provide reassurance, guidance, first aid, or curriculum support (e.g., sport coaching), taking account of age, vulnerability, culture and personal boundaries.

When not appropriate:

- Where contact could reasonably be misinterpreted and a non-contact approach is effective.
- Where the pupil is resisting and contact would become restrictive without necessity.

A2. Low-Level Restrictive Intervention (Guiding / Escorting)

Description: Physical contact that **slightly limits movement** to guide or escort, but does not immobilise.

Examples:

- Holding a pupil's forearm/upper arm to guide them away from a developing risk.
- Escorting a pupil from a classroom where they are refusing verbally but not physically resisting.
- Positioning hands/arms as a barrier to block movement toward another person or hazardous area.

When appropriate (see Sections 6 and 7):

- Where there is an **emerging risk** and de-escalation alone is insufficient.
- To remove a pupil from a situation likely to escalate to harm.
- To reduce risk while seeking support, including moving the audience away.

When not appropriate:

- As a routine response to non-compliance.
- Where the pupil is struggling forcefully and escalation to higher-risk restraint would be required without clear necessity.

A3. Physical Restraint (Restricting Movement to Prevent Harm)

Description: Direct physical contact intended to **restrict movement** to prevent harm.

Examples:

- Holding a pupil's arms to prevent them striking another person.
- Restricting movement to prevent a pupil running into a road or unsafe area.
- Holding to prevent serious self-injury (e.g., head-banging where immediate injury is likely).

When appropriate (see Section 7): Restraint may be used **only** where there is a **real and immediate risk** of:

- Injury to the pupil or others;
- Serious self-harm;
- Serious damage to property where safety is compromised;
- A criminal offence;
- Unsafe disorder where good order cannot be maintained without intervention.

Key requirements (see Sections 5, 7 and 10):

- Use the **minimum force for the shortest possible time**.
- Continuously assess risk; **reduce and release** as soon as it is safe.
- Maintain airway, dignity and wellbeing; use calm communication throughout.
- Where practicable, restraint should be undertaken by staff with relevant training and competence.

When not appropriate:

- To enforce compliance, complete a sanction, or "win" a confrontation.
- Where risk is low and can be managed by de-escalation, space, time, or removal of others.

A4. Planned Restrictive Intervention (Behaviour Support Plan / Risk Assessed)

Description: A pre-identified approach used as part of an agreed **Behaviour Support Plan** and/or risk assessment.

Examples:

- A planned response for a pupil with known behaviours that present predictable risk.
- Agreed steps for staff roles (lead communicator, help-seeker, space management) and any planned restrictive interventions if necessary.

When appropriate (see Section 9):

- Where foreseeable risks exist and a current plan/risk assessment is in place.
- Where the plan is shared with relevant staff and reviewed regularly.
- Where parents/carers are involved and informed, as appropriate.
- Where staff have relevant training/competence.

When not appropriate:

- Without a current risk assessment/plan.
- If used routinely rather than as a last resort within the plan.

A5. Seclusion (Use of a Separate Space for Safety)

Description: The **supervised** confinement of a pupil away from others **for safety reasons**; never as punishment.

Examples:

- A pupil supervised in a designated safer room/space during an acute crisis to prevent harm.
- Temporary supervised separation while de-escalation occurs and the environment is made safe.

When appropriate (see Sections 7, 10 and 11):

- Where the pupil cannot safely remain with others and there is a real and immediate risk of harm.
- Where **continuous supervision** is maintained.
- For the **shortest time necessary**, with ongoing assessment and clear steps to reintegrate.

When not appropriate:

- As a disciplinary sanction.
- Without supervision.
- As a routine strategy without review, support planning, and identified learning.

A6. Prohibited / Unacceptable Practices

The following are **never permitted** (see Section 8):

- Force as punishment or humiliation.
- Pain-inducing techniques.
- Prone (face-down) restraint.
- Restricting breathing or circulation.
- Holding or contact that is sexually inappropriate or breaches safeguarding (including contact with intimate areas).

A7. Practical Guidance During an Incident (Working Positively)

Where physical intervention is necessary, staff should, as far as practicable:

- Use calm, clear language and give a final instruction to stop.
- Call for assistance early.
- Remove the audience/other pupils from the area.
- Remove objects/furniture that increase risk where safe to do so.
- Communicate throughout: explain what is happening and that intervention will stop when the pupil is calm/safe.
- Allow space and reduce threat where possible (positioning, tone, time).

APPENDIX B: Staff Quick Reference – Key Assurances

- CET does **not** have a no-touch policy
- All staff and responsible adults have a **duty to intervene** to prevent harm
- Use the **least intrusive** option
- Record and report all significant incidents
- The Trust will support lawful, reasonable action

APPENDIX C: Recording incidents

All incidents must be recorded on CPOMS under the code “physical handling or restraint” ASAP or at least on the same day/ 24 hours from the time of the incident. Reports must include the following information as a minimum.

- Date / Time / Location
- Pupil(s) involved including witnesses.
- Staff involved including witnesses.
- Risk identified
- Intervention used
- Duration
- Injuries / outcomes
- Parental contact