



Hummingbird Learning Lab

Restrictive Interventions Policy: Including Positive Handling, Reasonable Force, Restraint and Seclusion

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Purpose

The Hummingbird Learning Lab (HLL) is committed to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for all learners and staff. This policy is designed to guide HLL staff in the appropriate and safe use of restrictive interventions which may be required as a last resort to ensure the safety and wellbeing of learners and staff. Our policy is built on the principle that every learner has the right to be treated with dignity and respect at all times. This document serves to also support staff to proactively minimise the need to use restrictive interventions through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies, and where necessary, to help school staff to feel more confident in knowing how to use these interventions safely, appropriately and lawfully.

Restrictive interventions are never to be used as a disciplinary response. They are utilised strictly as a last resort when non-physical and de-escalation measures have been exhausted or are deemed ineffective in preventing immediate significant harm.

Key Legislation and Statutory Frameworks:

This policy directly incorporates and reflects all relevant statutory duties and legislative powers:

1. [Restrictive Interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools. Guidance for schools in England April 2026](#)

2. [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
3. [The Equality Act 2010](#)

Definitions:

Restrictive Intervention: "A means to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. This guidance uses 'restrictive interventions' as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways." (DfE, 2026, p. 5)

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, the application of which will depend on the circumstances." (DfE, 2026, p. 5)

Restraint: "A term used in legislation referring to a non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact. For example, holding a pupil's arms to their sides or removing a pupil's crutches would both be considered forms of restraint." (DfE, 2026, p. 5)

Seclusion: "A non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil 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." (DfE, 2026, p. 5)

Significant Incident: "Any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff... This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention." (DfE, 2026, p. 5)

Roles and Responsibilities

All team members at HLL must be aware of the process to be followed in the case of an incident occurring that positive handling or physical restraint may be necessary.

Preventative Strategies and De-Escalation

Whole-school preventative measures:

1. Environmental optimisation: spaces at HLL are designed to reduce sensory overload and give learners agency in where and how they self-regulate.
2. Relationship and trust: building strong, empathetic relationships between staff and learners so that potential triggers and signs of distress are noticed early.
3. Communication: staff are trained to use appropriate tone-of-voice, non-threatening posture and clear language.

Specific De-escalation techniques:

Whenever possible de-escalation techniques must be used to avoid and defuse non-compliance, crisis and conflict situations. De-escalation techniques can include: providing time and physical spaces for involved parties to calm-and-cool; calling-in another adult (including the Principal) to restate the need for a young person to follow directions in order to stay safe; speaking calmly, not standing face-on to the student, giving them ample

personal space, putting yourself down at their physical level, stating very simply and clearly what needs to happen next to keep the situation safe (e.g. "I need you to move away from the door, so I know everyone stays safe.")

Reasonable Force

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances. To prevent or stop a pupil from:

1. causing injury to themselves or others
2. committing a criminal offence
3. damaging property
4. causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

Examples of lawful use of force:

- Preventing a learner from leaving a learning space where allowing them to leave would risk their immediate safety or lead to unsafe behaviour.
- Stopping a physical fight or preventing a learner from attacking staff or peers.
- Restraining a learner at risk of self-harm through physical outbursts.

Prohibited and unacceptable use of force:

To ensure complete learner safety, the following practices are strictly prohibited at HLL:

- Punitive Force: Using force as a disciplinary penalty or response to non-compliance. *"It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment."* - DfE Guidance (April 2026, p. 7)
- Airway & Circulation Holds: Any restraint that puts pressure on the mouth, nose, neck region, chest, or abdomen, or in any way restricts breathing or circulation.
- Ground Restraints: Prone (face-down) or supine (face-up) ground holds carry extreme physical risks (including positional asphyxia). Staff must never intentionally restrain a learner on the ground. If a learner unexpectedly falls to the ground during a hold, staff must immediately release holds or re-position into a standing or safer posture.
- Pain-Compliant Holds: Using joint locks, pressure points, or twisting limbs to force movement.
- Substitutes for Support: Restraint must never replace appropriate educational, pastoral, or therapeutic provision.

Use of force during searches:

The Headteacher and authorised team members have a statutory power to search pupils for prohibited items (e.g., weapons) using reasonable force. Force can never be used to search for items that are banned under school rules only (e.g., mobile phones).

Staff members authorised by the Headteacher to search pupils for prohibited items are:

- Andy Carpenter
- Jemima Robertson

Restraint Procedure

The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgment of the team member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances. The decision to intervene physically rests on the professional judgment of the team member concerned, evaluated against three compulsory criteria:

1. **Is it necessary?** Staff should consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation. Staff should assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks, or whether its use would escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself. Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.
2. **Is it proportionate?** Staff should use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce the relevant risks. If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy. Staff should consider the personal circumstances of the pupil such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.
3. **Have you considered the learner's welfare?** Staff should consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken.
 - a. For example, pupils who have experienced an adverse life event, with diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, past trauma or neglect, communication difficulties, or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.
 - b. Staff should seek to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity. This may include, where possible, considering the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.
 - c. Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and explain what the pupil needs to do. For pupils with difficulties with speech, language and communication, or with English as an additional language, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies should be used to ensure the pupil understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond (example: "I'm holding you because I will not let you hurt yourself or anyone else. I will let you go as soon as you are safe.")
 - d. Staff should seek to understand how the pupil is feeling and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

Restraint, like any behavioral intervention for young people, must promote their right to be treated with dignity.

Reasonable force can be used to restrain a young person following these steps:

1. Gently but firmly hold to prevent the young person from harming themselves or others.
2. Use just enough force to restrain them safely, take care not to place pressure on their joints.
3. Speak in a reassuring, calm voice; "I'm holding you because I will not let you hurt yourself or anyone else. I'll let you go when you calm down"
4. Release them as soon as the behavior that is endangering them or others ceases.

Gently holding a hand, wrist, or arm to keep a student alongside you is preferable. If this is not enough to ensure the physical safety of the learner and/or of others then consider either of the two forms of restraint below:

https://lh7-us.googleusercontent.com/WBz39eqe3JvBIQ-SYOEWQ-7o1qMQLIwe-b6A_iuQQMmtHNPSIemg-vDX1tT4OaPSIFh2_WhrvmpW__b4BqwRobnZodDF5Qccg3Pt8sJxTwzxc8O81Zod1DAmdPe4ubNwW6gl-rsd7eFCDOx61yEfLHcHqA5Vu9J

Standing restraints are meant to restrict a young person's arms. Cross their arms over their chest from behind and lean them back just enough to prevent them kicking you. Or grasp their arms while standing beside them.

https://lh7-us.googleusercontent.com/IYqdBfYCYuobQSHroSvPC3YK9aGWltq2rrOTWYy5s4x1njTLNC9_gjLtoZ9yKM0TixFd2cjZvb9evqQsr4nc0DmwZlIre8AL19HuBAhLAtk38atg9YyH-Pix-FzD4RG2jqA5XGdXeeDVBF14qGJgJiOYQ1IQRQvz4

If helpful and possible, ask other young people to leave the room/area occupied by the young person being restrained. It is often better to remove others than to move the restrained individual.

If you are restraining a young person, or thinking that restraint is a possibility, then bring another adult to you for support. Do this using a phone, or by sending another learner to tell an adult they are needed immediately, or by calling out (last resort as this may risk escalation of the learner's behaviour).

If you are called to support an adult who is restraining a young person, ask that adult, "What do you need me to do?" and be careful not to escalate the situation further with your presence.

Restraint can be a particularly intense experience for older children. You may have to back off for a moment if a child seems to become more intensely emotional when being restrained. Remember, the reason for restraint is their safety and the safety of others. If restraint is escalating the likelihood of physical danger, there might be reason for you to back off.

Restrain older children only if you have the strength to both stop their behaviour and protect yourself and the child from harm. If adults have to use restraint more than

extremely rarely with any aged young person, professional help is needed. Children who frequently meet the criteria for restraint need professional support and counseling.

Seclusion and Non-Force Restraint

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil 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.

Operational Rules:

1. Seclusion is not a disciplinary response to deliberate misbehaviour and should not be implemented by staff through threat of punishment.
2. It should only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation.
3. The space must be safe, comfortable and non-intimidating.
4. The learner must be supported by an adult at all times.
5. The learner must be allowed to leave the space immediately once the risk of harm has reduced.

Immobilising a pupil or restricting their movement without physical contact (such as removing a learner's walking aid, mobility equipment, or wheelchair brakes) is legally defined as restraint. It carries the same mandatory recording and parental reporting obligations as physical restraint

Appropriate Physical Contact (Non-Restrictive)

HLL does not have a 'no contact' policy, nor will HLL accept parental requests for 'no contact'. A 'no contact' rule prevents team members from properly protecting or supporting learners.

Examples of appropriate, non-restrictive contact include but are not limited to:

- Administering first aid
- Guiding or escorting a pupil (for example guiding a learner by the elbow to a self-regulation space)
- Comforting a distressed pupil
- Congratulating or praising a pupil (e.g. a handshake or high five)
- Demonstrating physical techniques in PE or music instruction.

Considerations for Learners with SEND

Learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or communication difficulties may display dysregulated behaviour due to distress, sensory overload, pain, or anxiety. They must not be penalised for communication challenges.

- **Understanding Triggers:** Team members must identify individual sensory triggers, communication barriers, and early distress signals.

- **Individual Behaviour Support Plans (BSPs):** BSPs must be co-produced with the learner, parents, and pastoral teams. BSPs must set out proactive adjustments, de-escalation steps, and explicitly define any agreed situations where physical contact or guidance is appropriate.
- **Risk Assessments:** Where there is a known risk that a pupil may require physical intervention, individual risk assessments must be put in place, reviewed regularly, and backed by appropriate staff training.

Recording and Reporting Procedures

HLL operates a strict statutory recording and reporting process following the steps below:

1. **Immediate actions:**
 - a. Ensure medical safety of the learner and that first aid is administered if applicable and that safety of all learners and staff is ensured.
 - b. Inform the Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately if you have restrained a young person.
2. **Record intervention (same day)**
 - a. Complete a child protection and safeguarding form.
 - b. Complete entry of intervention on HLL Behaviour and Bullying Log either under the 'Restrictive Force' tab or the 'Seclusion' tab.
3. **Statutory parent notification (same day)**
 - a. Send a written report of the intervention to parents (Annex A) Next steps which will be placed on the Safeguarding Record and followed-up accordingly)
4. **Debrief and governance**
 - a. Conduct pupil and staff reflective debriefs.
 - b. Review behaviour support plan of learner and update data log.

Recording Location and Rules

All incidents involving restrictive force, seclusion, or non-force restraint must be recorded in writing on the same day. Recording is conducted in the HLL Behaviour and Bullying Log, which features dedicated, segregated tabs:

1. Tab: Restrictive Force: For all incidents involving reasonable physical force or physical/non-physical restraint.
2. Tab: Seclusion: For any instance where a pupil is confined alone in a space and prevented from leaving.

All columns in the log must be completed and must document:

1. Names of the pupil and staff members directly involved.
2. Relevant pupil circumstances, including SEND status code.
3. Exact time, date, location, and duration of the intervention.
4. Full narrative: lead-up, identified triggers, and de-escalation strategies attempted.

5. Type of intervention, degree of force used, and clear justification of why force was necessary.
6. Details of any injuries sustained and post-incident medical care or support provided.

Statutory Parental Reporting Duty (See Annex A for template)

Timing: Parents/carers must be notified in writing (e.g., via secure email or formal report) as soon as practicable, and no later than the end of the same day.

Mandatory Content for Parents: Date, time, duration, location, reason for intervention, type/degree of force used, and injury details.

Statutory Exceptions: Reporting to a parent is withheld only if doing so would likely result in serious harm to the pupil (in which case the Local Authority Safeguarding Team is notified).

Post-Intervention Care, Debrief and Wellbeing

Following any restrictive intervention, HLL implements a structured debriefing process to support wellbeing, repair relationships, and facilitate learning:

1. Medical Check: Immediate first aid or medical assessment must be provided to any learner or staff member involved. Physical injuries must be logged and reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE/RIDDOR) where applicable.
2. Staff & Pupil Debriefs: Debrief conversations must take place as soon as practical.
 - Conversations should ideally be facilitated by a trained staff member not directly involved in the incident to maintain impartiality.
 - Debriefs focus on understanding triggers, listening to the pupil's perspective, restoring trust, and identifying changes needed to prevent future incidents.
3. Plan Review: Individual Behaviour Support Plans (BSPs) and risk assessments must be reviewed and updated in light of the debrief findings.

Governance and Complaints

The Headteacher, DSL/DDSL and Proprietor must regularly interrogate and analyse incident data from the Behaviour and Bullying Log to:

- Identify repeat patterns, triggers, and institutional trends.
- Detect any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions regarding pupils with protected characteristics or SEND.
- Identify staff training needs and evaluate policy effectiveness.

Complaints and safeguarding allegations

- Any parental complaints regarding the use of restrictive interventions will be processed under the HLL Complaints Policy
- Allegations of excessive or improper force made against a team member must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and handled in

strict accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) procedures.

Additional guidelines:

A young person repeatedly not following adults' directions, whatever those directions are, can quickly result in an unsafe situation arising. Prioritise making a behaviour plan for such a learner, alerting the Leadership, and letting parents know why our school must take non-compliance seriously.

Related HLL policies and helpful links:

Behaviour Policy

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

[Better alternatives to restraint](#)

Annex A: Statutory Parent Notification & Written Incident Report

A copy must be completed and transmitted to parents/carers in writing no later than the end of the same day).

Learner Details	
Full Name of Learner:	
Date of Birth / Year Group:	

Incident Overview	
Date of Incident:	

Time of Incident:	
Exact Duration:	
Location / Learning Space:	
Staff Members Involved:	
Witnesses (Staff/Pupils):	

1. Context, Triggers & De-escalation

Identified Triggers / Context Leading to Incident:

(Describe environmental factors, emotional state, or preceding events)

De-escalation Strategies Attempted Prior to Intervention:

(Check all that applied)

- ☐ Verbal calming / supportive tone
- ☐ Offering choice / calm space[cite: 1]
- ☐ Distraction / redirection
- ☐ Change of staff member[cite: 1]
- ☐ Clearing peers from the area[cite: 1]
- ☐ Giving explicit processing time

2. Statutory Justification for Intervention

Under Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the intervention was assessed as strictly necessary to prevent:

- ☐ Immediate risk of injury to the learner or others
- ☐ Significant damage to property
- ☐ The commission of a criminal offence
- ☐ Severe disorder impacting school safety

3. Intervention Details

Type of Intervention Applied:

(e.g., Standing restraint, guide by arm, removal of physical mobility aid, temporary seclusion)

Degree of Force Used & Narrative:

(Describe how force was kept to the minimum necessary for the shortest possible duration)

4. Injuries, Post-Incident Care & Debrief

- **Physical Injuries Sustained (Learner or Staff):** None / Details:
- **Medical First Aid / Treatment Provided:** [Enter text here]
- **Learner Post-Incident Wellbeing & Support Provided:** [Enter text here]

5. Sign-Off & Parental Communication

Report Completed By (Staff Name & Role): _____

Authorised By (Headteacher/DSL): _____

Date & Time Logged in HLL Behaviour Log: _____

Date & Time Sent to Parent/Carer: _____

Method of Delivery: (e.g., Secure Email / Hand Delivered) _____

Note to Parents/Carers:

We view physical intervention as a measure of last resort to maintain safety. We invite you to attend a follow-up conversation with school leaders to discuss this incident, review or develop your child's Behaviour Support Plan, and share strategies to prevent future occurrences.