Ferring CE Primary School	
Policy:	**Use of Reasonable Force and Restrictive Interventions**
Policy date:	Autumn 2026
Review date:	Autumn 2027
Person responsible	Headteacher

1. Purpose and aims

Ferring CE Primary School is committed to providing a safe, nurturing and inclusive environment in which every child can grow with love, believe with hope and achieve with joy.

The school promotes positive behaviour through clear expectations, strong relationships, consistent routines, appropriate support and effective teaching of behaviour. Physical intervention is therefore **rare** and is never used as a routine method of managing behaviour.

This policy sets out the circumstances in which staff may lawfully use reasonable force or another restrictive intervention to keep pupils, staff or other people safe. It also establishes the school's expectations for prevention, de-escalation, risk assessment, recording, reporting, review and learning.

The school will always seek to:

- understand behaviour as communication of an underlying need;
- identify and reduce known triggers and barriers;
- make reasonable adjustments where appropriate;
- use positive, relational and restorative approaches;
- de-escalate situations at the earliest opportunity;
- use the least restrictive response that is reasonably necessary;
- protect the dignity, safety and wellbeing of everyone involved;
- learn from incidents and reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

This policy should be read alongside the school's Behaviour Policy and Inclusion/SEND Policy.

2. Legal and statutory framework

This policy is based on the legal powers and responsibilities of schools and the following guidance and legislation:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, particularly section 93;
- Department for Education: *Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools*, effective from 1 April 2026;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Children and Families Act 2014;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, as applicable;
- Department for Education behaviour guidance;
- West Sussex County Council inclusion and positive-handling guidance;

- Ofsted’s state-funded school inspection framework and toolkit applicable from 7 September 2026.

The DfE’s 2026 guidance replaces the previous *Use of reasonable force in schools* guidance from 1 April 2026.

Staff should understand that the law gives authorised school staff the power to use reasonable force where necessary and proportionate. This does not mean that staff are required to use force.

3. What is reasonable force?

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 allows teachers and other authorised members of staff to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a pupil from:

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

Whether the use of force is reasonable depends on the circumstances of the individual incident.

Factors that may be relevant include:

- the seriousness of the situation;
- the likelihood of injury or harm;
- the age, size and developmental stage of the pupil;
- the pupil’s individual needs and circumstances;
- any known SEND, communication, sensory or medical needs;
- the pupil’s previous experiences where these are known and relevant;
- the risks to other pupils and staff;
- what other strategies had been attempted;
- whether the force used was necessary and proportionate;
- whether the intervention stopped as soon as it was safe to do so.

The use of force must never be excessive, punitive, retaliatory or used to humiliate a pupil.

4. Definitions

4.1 Physical contact

Ordinary physical contact in school is not necessarily a restrictive intervention. This may include:

- guiding a young child by the hand;
- supporting a pupil who is injured;
- administering first aid;
- providing physical assistance with mobility;
- appropriate physical reassurance where welcomed and appropriate;

- helping a pupil safely participate in an activity.

4.2 Reasonable force

Reasonable force is physical force used by an authorised member of staff when it is necessary and proportionate to prevent harm, injury, damage or serious disruption within the circumstances permitted by law.

4.3 Restrictive intervention

A restrictive intervention is an intervention that deliberately restricts a pupil's movement or freedom in order to prevent harm or maintain safety.

This may include physical restraint and, in particular circumstances, other forms of restriction.

Restrictive intervention must always be:

- necessary;
- proportionate;
- used for the shortest time reasonably necessary;
- carried out with regard to the pupil's dignity and welfare;
- recorded and reviewed where required by this policy and DfE guidance.

4.4 Seclusion

Seclusion involves deliberately isolating a pupil in a room or space from which they are prevented from leaving.

Ferring CE Primary School does **not** use seclusion as a routine behaviour-management strategy.

A pupil may, however, be supported or encouraged to move to a quieter, safer or lower-arousal space as part of de-escalation, regulation or support. This is not automatically seclusion provided that the pupil is able to leave and is not being prevented from doing so.

Any situation in which a pupil is prevented from leaving a space must be treated with particular caution and managed in accordance with current DfE guidance.

5. Fundamental principles

All staff must apply the following principles.

5.1 Prevention

Physical intervention should be prevented wherever reasonably possible.

Staff should seek to understand:

- what triggers or escalates the pupil;
- what the behaviour may be communicating;
- what environmental factors contribute to dysregulation;
- what communication approaches are effective;
- what helps the pupil to regulate;
- which adults, routines, spaces or strategies provide reassurance.

5.2 De-escalation

Staff should use appropriate de-escalation strategies before considering restrictive intervention wherever this is safe and practicable.

These may include:

- calm and clear language;
- reduced verbal demands;
- appropriate processing time;
- offering limited choices;
- changing the adult supporting the pupil;
- distraction or redirection;
- reducing sensory stimulation;
- moving other pupils away;
- allowing space;
- offering access to an agreed calm or safe space;
- using agreed scripts or visual prompts;
- acknowledging the pupil's feelings;
- reducing unnecessary confrontation;
- using an agreed individual regulation strategy.

5.3 Least restrictive response

Where intervention becomes necessary, staff should use the least restrictive option that is reasonably necessary to maintain safety.

The intervention should stop as soon as it is no longer necessary.

5.4 Dignity

All interventions must be undertaken in a manner that protects the pupil's dignity and avoids unnecessary embarrassment, humiliation or distress.

Other pupils should be moved away from an incident where reasonably possible.

5.5 Proportionality

The level and duration of any intervention must be proportionate to the risk being managed.

A pupil must never be subjected to a more restrictive intervention simply because they are non-compliant, verbally challenging or refusing an instruction where there is no lawful justification for the use of force.

5.6 No punishment

Physical intervention must never be used:

- as a punishment;
- to cause pain;
- to demonstrate authority;
- out of anger or frustration;
- because a pupil is refusing to comply where there is no immediate safety justification;

- as a substitute for effective behaviour support;
- to intimidate or frighten a pupil.

6. Inclusion, SEND and reasonable adjustments

Ferring CE Primary School recognises that behaviour may be affected by:

- special educational needs and/or disabilities;
- autism;
- communication and interaction difficulties;
- sensory needs;
- social, emotional and mental health needs;
- developmental differences;
- trauma or adverse experiences;
- medical conditions;
- anxiety;
- difficulties with transitions, change or uncertainty.

The school will make reasonable adjustments where required under the Equality Act 2010 and will consider individual needs when applying behaviour expectations and responding to incidents.

West Sussex guidance emphasises that behaviour policies should be applied consistently while allowing appropriate reasonable adjustments for individual pupils.

Staff should not assume that a pupil's behaviour is deliberate or wilfully defiant without considering the context and underlying need.

Where a pupil's behaviour presents a recurring risk of harm or there is a reasonable likelihood that restrictive intervention may be required, the school will consider whether an individual plan or risk assessment is necessary.

This may include:

- an individual behaviour support plan;
- positive handling plan;
- risk management plan;
- pastoral support plan;
- SEN support plan;
- healthcare plan;
- individual communication or regulation plan.

Where appropriate, plans should be developed in partnership with:

- the pupil;
- parents/carers;
- the SENCO/Inclusion Lead;
- relevant staff;
- external professionals where appropriate.

Plans should identify:

- known triggers;
- early warning signs;
- preventative strategies;
- reasonable adjustments;
- preferred de-escalation approaches;
- effective communication;
- strategies to reduce anxiety;
- safe spaces;
- people who can provide support;
- actions to take if risk escalates;
- any relevant medical considerations;
- post-incident recovery strategies.

Plans must be reviewed regularly and following any significant incident.

West Sussex guidance specifically recommends risk assessment and proactive planning where dysregulation presents a risk to the pupil or others.

7. When may reasonable force be used?

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

- causing injury to themselves;
- causing injury to another person;
- committing an offence;
- damaging property;
- seriously prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline.

Examples might include:

- preventing a pupil from running into a road;
- stopping a pupil attacking another pupil;
- preventing a pupil from causing serious injury to themselves;
- preventing dangerous use of an object;
- stopping a pupil entering an area presenting an immediate and serious danger;
- intervening to prevent serious damage to property where other strategies are not sufficient.

The examples are illustrative rather than exhaustive.

Staff should consider whether the risk can safely be managed through other means before using force.

8. When reasonable force should not be used

Reasonable force must not be used merely because a pupil:

- refuses to complete work;
- refuses an instruction;
- is verbally disrespectful;
- is swearing;
- is upset or crying;
- is having a disagreement with another pupil;
- is displaying low-level disruptive behaviour;
- is refusing to leave a lesson where there is no immediate safety risk;
- is expressing an opinion or emotion;
- is displaying behaviour that can safely be managed through other means.

The school's Behaviour Policy provides the framework for managing ordinary behaviour incidents.

9. Staff authorised to use reasonable force

All teachers and other members of staff who are authorised by the Headteacher and who have lawful control or charge of pupils may have the power to use reasonable force within the law.

Staff should use professional judgement and should not put themselves or others at unreasonable risk.

Staff are not expected to intervene physically where doing so would expose them to an unacceptable risk of injury.

Where possible, staff should seek assistance from another adult.

A member of staff should not intervene physically simply because another adult asks them to do so if they do not believe that intervention is necessary or proportionate.

10. Staff training

The school will ensure that staff understand:

- the legal framework;
- the principles of necessity and proportionality;
- prevention and de-escalation;
- safeguarding implications;
- SEND and reasonable adjustments;
- the school's recording and reporting procedures;
- their own responsibilities and limitations.

Where physical intervention training is considered necessary, the school will use an appropriately recognised and approved positive-handling programme.

Where Team Teach is used, staff must understand that the training provides strategies and techniques to support prevention, de-escalation and safe positive handling; it does not itself create a legal authority to use force.

West Sussex currently provides Team Teach/positive behaviour training which emphasises prevention and de-escalation and provides safe positive-handling techniques where required.

The school will maintain appropriate records of staff training and will identify refresher training where necessary.

New staff will receive appropriate induction regarding this policy and the school's behaviour and safeguarding procedures.

11. Use of physical techniques

Where physical intervention is necessary, staff should use only techniques for which they have been appropriately trained, where such training is available and where the technique is appropriate to the circumstances.

Staff should:

- use the minimum force necessary;
- use the shortest duration reasonably necessary;
- continually assess whether intervention remains necessary;
- communicate calmly where possible;
- avoid unnecessary physical contact;
- release the pupil as soon as it is safe to do so;
- seek assistance where appropriate.

Staff must never use techniques intended to cause pain or injury.

Staff must never:

- strike, punch or kick a pupil;
- deliberately trip a pupil;
- twist limbs against joints;
- pull hair;
- deliberately bend fingers;
- apply pressure to the neck or throat;
- obstruct breathing;
- place unnecessary pressure on the chest, abdomen or face;
- use a technique designed to cause pain as a means of gaining compliance;
- use physical intervention as punishment.

Particular care must be taken with pupils who have medical conditions, physical disabilities, sensory needs or other characteristics that may increase the risk of harm.

12. Responding to an escalating situation

Where a situation is escalating, staff should, where safe and practicable:

1. remain calm and regulate their own response;
2. reduce unnecessary verbal interaction;
3. use clear, simple language;
4. provide appropriate processing time;

5. offer choices where possible;
6. use the pupil's known regulation strategies;
7. reduce demands where appropriate;
8. remove potential hazards;
9. move other pupils away if necessary;
10. seek assistance from another adult;
11. follow any individual risk management or positive handling plan;
12. use reasonable force only where necessary and proportionate.

The priority is always to maintain safety while preserving the pupil's dignity.

13. Emergency situations

In an emergency, staff may need to act immediately to prevent serious harm.

In such circumstances, staff should use their professional judgement and take reasonable steps to protect:

- the pupil;
- other pupils;
- staff;
- visitors;
- members of the public;
- property where relevant.

The fact that an incident is unexpected does not remove the requirement for any intervention to be reasonable and proportionate.

14. Moving other pupils to safety

Where a pupil becomes significantly dysregulated or presents a risk to others, the safest and least restrictive response may sometimes be to move other pupils away from the immediate area.

This should be considered before physically intervening with the pupil where appropriate.

Staff should avoid creating an audience around a pupil in distress.

The school will seek to minimise embarrassment and protect confidentiality.

15. Seclusion and restrictive spaces

Ferring CE Primary School does not operate a routine seclusion system.

A calm area, regulation space or quiet space may be available to pupils as part of an agreed support strategy. Such a space should normally be accessible voluntarily or with supportive encouragement and should not be used as a punitive isolation area.

Staff must not lock a pupil in a room or prevent them from leaving a space unless there is a specific and lawful justification under the circumstances and the response is consistent with current DfE guidance.

Any incident involving a pupil being prevented from leaving a space must be reported to the Headteacher or senior leader immediately and recorded appropriately.

16. Medical considerations

Some pupils may have medical or physical conditions which affect the risks associated with physical intervention.

Relevant information should be considered as part of individual risk assessment and support planning.

Where a pupil has a healthcare plan, staff should be familiar with relevant instructions.

Where there is uncertainty about a pupil's medical needs, advice should be sought from an appropriate health professional.

If a pupil becomes unwell or injured during or following an intervention, appropriate first aid or medical assistance must be provided.

17. Recording incidents

All significant incidents involving the use of force or restrictive intervention must be recorded in accordance with current DfE requirements and the school's recording procedures.

The record should include, as appropriate:

- the pupil's name;
- date, time and location;
- names of staff involved;
- names of witnesses;
- the circumstances leading to the incident;
- known triggers or antecedents;
- de-escalation strategies attempted;
- why intervention became necessary;
- the type of intervention used;
- approximately how long the intervention lasted;
- how the intervention ended;
- any injuries or first aid;
- the pupil's account where appropriate;
- the staff member's account;
- whether parents/carers were informed;
- any safeguarding concerns;
- follow-up actions;
- changes required to individual plans or risk assessments.

Records must be factual, objective and free from emotive or judgemental language.

The school will use its established safeguarding/behaviour recording system where appropriate, ensuring that records can be retrieved and analysed.

18. Reporting to parents/carers

Parents/carers will be informed of significant incidents involving the use of force or restrictive intervention in accordance with current DfE requirements and the school's procedures.

Communication should:

- be timely;
- be factual;
- explain the circumstances;
- explain the reason intervention was necessary;
- avoid disclosing confidential information about other pupils;
- provide an opportunity for parents/carers to ask questions.

Where appropriate, the school will work with parents/carers to identify strategies that may reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Where a pupil has SEND or other additional needs, parents/carers should be involved in reviewing relevant support and risk management arrangements.

19. Safeguarding

Any use of physical intervention must be considered within the school's safeguarding framework.

Staff must report any safeguarding concern arising from an incident in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Particular consideration must be given to:

- allegations that an adult has used excessive force;
- unexplained or significant injuries;
- repeated restrictive interventions;
- patterns of intervention involving a particular pupil;
- concerns about staff conduct;
- concerns that a pupil's individual needs are not being appropriately met.

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff, the school's safeguarding and allegations procedures must be followed.

The use of reasonable force does not remove or reduce the requirement to respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns.

20. Post-incident response

Following an incident, the priority is recovery and restoration.

20.1 Immediate response

Staff should:

- ensure everyone is safe;
- provide first aid where required;

- obtain medical assistance if necessary;
- allow the pupil time and space to recover;
- inform the Headteacher or appropriate senior leader;
- ensure other pupils affected by the incident are supported.

20.2 Pupil debrief

When the pupil is calm and able to engage, an appropriate adult should provide an opportunity to discuss:

- what happened;
- how the pupil was feeling;
- what they were trying to communicate;
- what helped;
- what made things more difficult;
- what could be done differently next time.

The pupil's voice should be considered when reviewing individual support.

20.3 Staff debrief

Staff involved should have an opportunity to reflect on the incident.

This should consider:

- what happened before the incident;
- which strategies were successful;
- whether intervention was necessary;
- whether the response was proportionate;
- whether the intervention could have been avoided;
- whether further support or training is required.

The purpose of the debrief is learning and support, not blame.

21. Review following an incident

The Headteacher or delegated senior leader should review significant incidents.

The reviewer should not normally be a member of staff who was directly involved in the intervention.

The review should consider:

- necessity;
- proportionality;
- duration;
- the pupil's individual circumstances;
- SEND and reasonable adjustments;
- effectiveness of de-escalation;
- whether the pupil's support plan was followed;
- whether the support plan remains appropriate;
- whether further assessment is required;
- whether parents/carers should be involved in a review;

- whether safeguarding action is required;
- whether staff training or support is required.

Where incidents are repeated, the school will consider whether additional advice or support is required from the SENCO/Inclusion Lead, Educational Psychology, West Sussex SEND and Inclusion services or another appropriate professional service.

22. Repeated incidents and individual planning

Where restrictive intervention becomes a recurring feature of a pupil's experience, the school will not simply continue to respond to each incident individually.

The school will seek to identify and address underlying causes.

This may include:

- analysing patterns and triggers;
- reviewing the curriculum and learning environment;
- reviewing reasonable adjustments;
- consulting with parents/carers;
- obtaining the pupil's views;
- developing or updating a risk management plan;
- developing or updating a positive handling plan;
- implementing a Pastoral Support Plan;
- reviewing SEN Support;
- seeking advice from external professionals.

The aim will always be to **reduce and, where possible, eliminate the need for restrictive intervention**

23. Monitoring and analysis

The Headteacher will monitor the use of physical intervention and restrictive interventions.

The school will consider:

- number of incidents;
- frequency;
- duration where relevant;
- location;
- time of day;
- circumstances and triggers;
- pupils involved;
- staff involved;
- injuries;
- use of particular interventions;
- repeated incidents;
- patterns involving pupils with SEND or other protected characteristics;
- effectiveness of preventative strategies;
- actions taken following incidents.

Analysis will be used to identify:

- patterns;
- emerging risks;
- training needs;
- environmental changes;
- reasonable adjustments;
- additional support requirements;
- opportunities to reduce restrictive intervention.

Where patterns suggest that a particular group of pupils is disproportionately subject to intervention, leaders will investigate the reasons and consider whether practice, policy or provision needs to change.

24. Leadership and governance oversight

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that:

- this policy is implemented;
- staff understand their responsibilities;
- staff receive appropriate training;
- incidents are appropriately recorded;
- parents/carers are informed where required;
- significant incidents are reviewed;
- patterns are analysed;
- appropriate action is taken following incidents.

The governing body will provide appropriate oversight of the school's approach to behaviour, inclusion and safeguarding.

Governors may monitor:

- the frequency and nature of physical interventions;
- whether incidents are appropriately recorded and reviewed;
- staff training;
- patterns and trends;
- actions taken to reduce restrictive intervention;
- the experiences of pupils with SEND and other pupils facing barriers.

Governors should not routinely receive identifiable details about individual pupils unless this is necessary and lawful.

25. Equality and inclusion

The school will apply this policy consistently while recognising that equality does not always mean identical treatment.

Reasonable adjustments will be made where required.

The school will consider whether its response to behaviour is appropriate for pupils with:

- SEND;
- disabilities;

- communication difficulties;
- sensory needs;
- social, emotional and mental health needs;
- other protected characteristics.

The school will seek to ensure that restrictive intervention is not used disproportionately because of a pupil's disability or additional need.

26. Complaints and concerns

Parents/carers who have concerns about the use of reasonable force or restrictive intervention should raise these with the Headteacher in the first instance.

Where a concern relates to the Headteacher, it should be raised with the Chair of Governors.

The school's Complaints Policy will apply where a formal complaint is made.

Where an allegation concerns a member of staff and meets safeguarding thresholds, the school's safeguarding procedures will take precedence.

27. Staff responsibilities

All staff are expected to:

- understand this policy;
- maintain professional conduct;
- use positive and preventative behaviour strategies;
- make reasonable adjustments where appropriate;
- use de-escalation strategies;
- seek assistance where necessary;
- use reasonable force only where lawful, necessary and proportionate;
- report incidents promptly;
- complete required records;
- participate in debriefing and review;
- maintain confidentiality;
- raise concerns about unsafe practice.

Staff must never use physical intervention because they are angry, frustrated or seeking compliance.

28. Key expectations for staff – summary

When faced with challenging or potentially dangerous behaviour, staff should remember:

Prevent → De-escalate → Protect → Intervene only if necessary → Release as soon as safe → Record → Report → Review → Learn

Staff should ask themselves:

1. What is happening?
2. What might the pupil be communicating?

3. Can I reduce the risk without using force?
4. Can I give the pupil space or time?
5. Can I move other pupils to safety?
6. What reasonable adjustments may be needed?
7. Is physical intervention necessary?
8. If so, what is the least restrictive response?
9. Is my response proportionate to the risk?
10. Can I stop as soon as it is safe?
11. What does the pupil need afterwards?
12. What needs to change to reduce the likelihood of this happening again?

29. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier where:

- legislation changes;
- DfE guidance changes;
- West Sussex County Council guidance changes;
- Ofsted requirements change;
- the school identifies a significant issue through monitoring;
- an incident indicates that amendments are necessary.

The Headteacher will ensure that staff are informed of significant changes.

Appendix 1 – Incident Review Questions

Following a significant incident, the reviewing senior leader should consider:

Before the incident

- What happened immediately beforehand?
- Were there identifiable triggers?
- Were reasonable adjustments in place?
- Was the pupil's individual plan being followed?
- Were there communication or sensory factors?
- Were staffing, environment or transition factors relevant?

During the incident

- Why was intervention necessary?
- What alternatives were attempted?
- Was the response reasonable and proportionate?
- Was the least restrictive approach used?
- Was the pupil treated with dignity?
- Was the intervention stopped as soon as it was safe?

After the incident

- Was anyone injured?
- Was first aid required?
- Was the pupil supported to regulate?
- Was the pupil's voice heard?
- Were parents/carers informed?
- Was the incident recorded appropriately?
- Were safeguarding concerns considered?

Learning

- What worked?
- What did not work?
- What could prevent recurrence?
- Does the pupil's plan need changing?
- Is further assessment required?
- Is further staff training required?
- Is additional external advice required?

Appendix 2 – Individual Positive Handling / Risk Management Plan

Where a pupil is considered to be at increased risk of dysregulation or requiring restrictive intervention, the school may develop an individual plan containing:

Pupil:
Date:
Review date:
Lead adult:

Known triggers

Early warning signs

Preventative strategies

Reasonable adjustments

Effective communication

De-escalation strategies

Preferred adults / safe spaces

Strategies to avoid

If risk increases

If physical intervention becomes necessary

- Use only where necessary and proportionate.
- Follow current DfE guidance and this policy.
- Use trained techniques where appropriate.
- Stop as soon as it is safe.
- Record and report the incident.

Recovery

Pupil's views

Parent/carer views

Review

Date:
Outcome:
Changes required: