

ST DOMINIC'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Restrictive Interventions and Use of Reasonable Force Policy

2026–27

EYFS to Sixth Form

Document control	Details
Policy owner	Headmaster
Safeguarding lead	Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
Legal accountability	Proprietor
Governance oversight	Governing Body
Applies to	All pupils, staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors, EYFS to Sixth Form
Effective from	1 September 2026
Review cycle	At least annually and following any significant incident or legal/guidance change
Next review	August 2027
Publication	School website and staff policy system

Core commitment Restrictive intervention is a safety measure of last resort, never a punishment. The School will prevent and de-escalate wherever possible, use the least restrictive lawful response for the shortest time, protect dignity, record and report as required, and learn from every incident.

Approval

Approved by	Name	Date
Chair of Governing Body	Sir M Griffiths	30-8-2026
Headmaster	P McNabb	24-8-2026

1. Purpose and status

This policy establishes the School's framework for preventing, authorising, using, recording, reporting, reviewing and governing restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, restraint and seclusion. It applies throughout the School day, on educational visits, at fixtures and events, on School transport and whenever staff have lawful charge of pupils.

It reflects the Department for Education guidance Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026), including the statutory guidance issued under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It should be read with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection, Behaviour, SEND, Risk Assessment and Pupil Welfare, First Aid and Medical, Educational Visits, Searching and Confiscation, Complaints and Staff Code of Conduct policies.

2. Principles

- The welfare, safety, dignity and human rights of each pupil are paramount.
- Positive relationships, reasonable adjustments, early support and de-escalation are the normal response.
- Any intervention must be lawful, necessary, proportionate, reasonable in the circumstances and used for the least amount of time.
- Restrictive intervention is never used to punish, humiliate, secure compliance for its own sake, or because a pupil is irritating or defiant.
- A pupil's SEND, disability, communication needs, medical needs, age, size, trauma, culture and other vulnerabilities must be considered.
- The School does not operate a "no-contact" policy; staff must be able to protect pupils and provide appropriate care.
- Parental agreement to a plan does not remove the need for staff to judge each incident individually or the duty to record and report.
- Every incident is followed by welfare checks, reflection, proportionate support and organisational learning.

3. Legal and regulatory framework

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, sections 93 and 93A.
- Education Act 1996, sections 550ZA and 550ZB (searching powers).
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025.
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, particularly welfare, health and safety, behaviour, safeguarding, complaints and leadership and management standards.
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004.
- Equality Act 2010, including reasonable adjustments and protection from discrimination.
- Human Rights Act 1998, including respect for dignity, private life and protection from inhuman or degrading treatment.
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and the current EYFS statutory framework.
- DfE guidance on behaviour, searching, safeguarding, SEND, mental health, exclusions and incident reporting.

4. Definitions

Term	Meaning for this policy
Restrictive intervention	The umbrella term for a physical or non-physical action intended to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of a pupil's body or part of it.
Reasonable force	Physical force used lawfully in limited circumstances. "Reasonable" means no more force than necessary, for the least time required.

Term	Meaning for this policy
Restraint	A non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises or limits movement, with or without direct contact; for example holding arms or removing a walking aid.
Seclusion	A non-disciplinary safety intervention in which a pupil is confined away from others and prevented from leaving by obstruction, blocking or belief that punishment will follow if they leave.
Withdrawal / self-regulation space	A pupil chooses, or is supported, to move to a safer or quieter space and remains free to leave. This is not seclusion.
Removal	A disciplinary measure under the Behaviour Policy in which a pupil is removed from a lesson but appropriately supervised and not prevented from leaving by restraint or threat.
Significant incident	Any incident where force goes beyond appropriate ordinary physical contact between pupils and staff, including force used to implement a non-physical restriction.

5. Roles and responsibilities

The Proprietor

- retains legal accountability and ensures compliant recording and reporting procedures are in place;
- takes all reasonable steps to ensure those procedures are followed;
- receives assurance on incidents, trends, equality, SEND, training and actions; and
- ensures adequate resources, competent advice and suitable insurance arrangements.

The Governing Body

- provides scrutiny and challenge on behalf of the Proprietor;
- reviews anonymised termly data, including repeat incidents and disproportionate impact;
- tests whether prevention, support, training and actions are effective; and
- reviews this policy annually and recommends changes to the Proprietor.

The Headmaster

- implements this policy, designates operational leads and ensures staff understand it;
- determines training needs from the School's context and pupil risk profiles;
- ensures immediate senior review of every incident;
- ensures records, parental notifications, safeguarding referrals, injury reports and follow-up are completed; and
- reports assurance and any serious concerns to the Proprietor and Governing Body.

The DSL and SENCo

- advise on safeguarding, trauma, SEND, disability, communication and contextual risks;
- ensure incidents are assessed for abuse, child-on-child harm, exploitation, self-harm or unmet need;
- co-produce and review individual support and risk plans with pupils, parents and professionals; and
- challenge any pattern of disproportionality or repeated intervention.

All staff

- use prevention and de-escalation and seek assistance early;
- make dynamic, child-centred decisions and never use force as punishment;
- follow medical and safety restrictions and act within their competence;
- report immediately, record before leaving that day wherever practicable, preserve evidence and engage in debriefing; and

- raise concerns about unsafe practice under safeguarding, low-level concerns or whistleblowing procedures.

6. Who may use reasonable force

All members of School staff have the statutory power to use reasonable force in the circumstances set out below. The Headmaster may also temporarily authorise another person who is lawfully in charge of pupils, such as a volunteer supporting a trip. Authorisation does not create an expectation that the person will intervene physically or act beyond their competence.

Personal safety Staff are not expected to put themselves at unreasonable risk. They should summon support, clear other pupils, call emergency services and use safer alternatives where these are likely to control the risk. In an immediate emergency, any person may act lawfully to prevent serious harm under the ordinary law of self-defence or defence of another.

7. Lawful circumstances

Staff may use reasonable force to prevent or stop a pupil from:

1. causing injury to themselves or another person;
2. committing a criminal offence;
3. damaging property; or
4. causing disorder among pupils at School, during teaching or otherwise.

Examples may include separating a fight, stopping a pupil using an object as a weapon, preventing immediate self-injury, moving a pupil away from a dangerous area or preventing a pupil from leaving where doing so would expose them or others to a real safety risk. Refusal, disruption or absconding alone does not automatically justify force; the legal purpose and actual risk must be identified.

8. The necessity and proportionality test

Question	Staff must consider
Is it necessary?	What immediate risk exists? Is there a less restrictive, more effective response? Will intervention reduce or increase risk?
Is it proportionate?	Use the least force or restriction for the shortest time. Continually reduce or stop as risk changes.
Have individual factors been considered?	Age, size, SEND, disability, communication, medical conditions, sensory needs, pregnancy, trauma, culture and other vulnerabilities.
Has welfare and dignity been protected?	Explain calmly, allow processing time, avoid an audience where possible, monitor distress and preserve privacy.
Is the method safe and within competence?	Avoid airway, breathing or circulation risk and any technique not taught or authorised. Summon trained help where possible.

9. Prevention and de-escalation

The School's first responsibility is to reduce the likelihood that intervention will be needed. Staff should use proportionate strategies such as:

- calm tone, non-threatening posture, simple language and adequate processing time;
- active listening, reassurance, choices and clear statements of what needs to happen;
- removing other pupils, dangerous objects, noise, audience or sensory triggers;

- offering space, movement, a familiar adult, a chosen regulation area or a preferred activity;
- using visual communication, first/then language or other agreed communication aids;
- recognising pain, hunger, fatigue, anxiety, bullying, trauma or unmet medical/SEND needs; and
- calling a senior colleague, DSL, SENCo, first aider, parent or emergency service early where helpful.

Staff should avoid crowding, cornering, shouting, provocative language, unnecessary touch, power struggles, rapid repeated demands or blocking an exit unless this is necessary to manage an immediate safety risk.

10. Individual planning, SEND and equality

Where a pupil is at foreseeable risk of needing restrictive intervention, the School will complete an individual risk assessment and, where appropriate, a co-produced behaviour support or safety plan. The pupil's voice will be sought in a form they can understand and use. The plan will normally include:

- strengths, needs, triggers, early warning signs and effective preventative strategies;
- communication methods and reasonable adjustments;
- preferred staff, safe locations and exit or recovery arrangements;
- medical contraindications and advice from health professionals;
- specific authorised strategies, parameters and techniques, with named trained staff where relevant;
- post-incident support and how the pupil wishes to be approached; and
- review dates and triggers, including after every significant incident.

A plan does not authorise automatic restraint and cannot remove the statutory judgement required in the actual circumstances. Conversely, the absence of a plan does not prevent lawful emergency action. The School will analyse whether pupils with SEND, disabilities or other protected characteristics are being disproportionately affected and will act on any disparity.

11. EYFS-specific arrangements

For children in the EYFS, staff will place particular emphasis on co-regulation, close supervision, predictable routines, age-appropriate communication and the child's developmental stage. Physical intervention may be used only where necessary and proportionate to prevent harm or meet another lawful purpose. Any intervention beyond ordinary care or appropriate physical contact will be reported immediately to the Headmaster and DSL, recorded, notified to parents in writing and reviewed for safeguarding and welfare implications. Staffing, first-aid and notification duties under the EYFS framework will also be followed.

12. Safe practice during an incident

5. Summon assistance and, where possible, ensure another adult witnesses the intervention.
6. Remove hazards and other pupils; keep an escape route and avoid crowding.
7. Identify and state the immediate safety concern. Continue calm communication and explain that intervention will stop when it is safe.
8. Use the least restrictive available method and minimum force; continually assess breathing, circulation, colour, consciousness, distress and injury.
9. Stop or change the intervention if it is ineffective, increases distress, creates a greater risk or the lawful purpose has ended.
10. Obtain first aid or emergency medical assistance without delay where required.
11. Notify the Headmaster or senior leader and the DSL immediately after the incident.

13. Prohibited and high-risk practice

Never permitted Corporal punishment; force used to punish, humiliate or cause pain; deliberate restriction of airway, breathing or circulation; covering the mouth or nose; pressure to the neck, throat, chest or abdomen; sexualised or indecent contact; and any intervention used through anger, retaliation or frustration.

Staff must not use unauthorised pain-compliance or distraction techniques, strike, kick, slap, punch, bite, pull hair, twist joints, force limbs behind the back, deliberately trip, straddle, sit or kneel on a pupil, or use mechanical or chemical restraint. The seated double embrace, double basket hold and nose distraction technique are not used.

Ground restraint is especially dangerous and is not a planned School technique. If a pupil is unintentionally on the ground, staff must release or reposition to a safer standing or other alternative as quickly as possible, subject only to what is immediately necessary to prevent greater harm. Emergency services should be called where risk cannot be managed safely.

14. Seclusion and isolation

The School does not use seclusion as a disciplinary sanction or routine behaviour-management technique. It may be used only as an exceptional safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high emotional or behavioural dysregulation and less restrictive measures are ineffective or unsafe.

- The place must be safe, appropriately lit and ventilated, not threatening or degrading, and free of obvious hazards.
- The pupil must be continuously supervised and able to communicate with staff.
- The door must not be locked. Any blocking or prevention of leaving must be no more than necessary and end immediately when the risk reduces.
- Health, breathing, distress and any medical needs must be continuously monitored.
- Every incident of seclusion must be recorded and reported in writing, even if no force was used and regardless of any prior parental agreement.

A pupil choosing to use a regulation space and remaining free to leave is not seclusion. A supervised disciplinary removal is governed by the Behaviour Policy and must not become unrecorded seclusion.

15. Searching pupils

Only the Headmaster and staff authorised by him may exercise statutory searching powers. Reasonable force may be used only to search for an item specifically prohibited by law, not merely an item banned by School rules. Staff must follow the School's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy and current DfE guidance, including safeguards concerning privacy, sex, witnesses and safeguarding. Intimate searches are never undertaken by School staff.

16. Appropriate physical contact

Appropriate contact may include first aid and personal care, guiding a young child, comforting a distressed pupil, congratulating a pupil, demonstrating PE, sport or music techniques, or supporting a pupil to a space they have chosen. Staff must use professional judgement, explain contact where appropriate, respect a pupil's communication and response, consider safeguarding and individual vulnerabilities, and avoid contact that could reasonably be viewed as sexual, secretive, coercive or unnecessary.

17. Immediate post-incident actions

12. Safety and medical care: check the pupil, staff and witnesses; provide first aid and obtain medical assessment or emergency help where appropriate. Record injuries under School procedures and consider RIDDOR.
13. Safeguarding: inform the DSL immediately. Consider whether the incident reveals abuse, exploitation, self-harm, unmet need, child-on-child harm, an allegation against staff or a need for referral to children's social care, police or the LADO.
14. Preserve evidence: retain CCTV, photographs of damage or injury where lawful and necessary, contemporaneous notes, witness details and relevant plans. Do not conduct a disciplinary-style interview before safeguarding or police advice where this could compromise enquiries.

15. Separate accounts: the staff member(s), pupil and witnesses should give their accounts separately and in an accessible form. The pupil must not be pressured to agree with the adult account.
16. Welfare support: provide calm recovery time, access to a trusted adult, medical or pastoral support, and support for distressed witnesses. Staff receive appropriate managerial and wellbeing support.
17. Debrief and repair: as soon as appropriate, a staff member not directly involved should facilitate reflective conversations, seek the pupil's voice and identify how relationships and safety can be restored.

18. Recording duties

Every significant use of force, every seclusion incident and every restraint incident (including non-contact restraint) must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable. The staff involved should endeavour to complete the record on the same day. Ordinary appropriate physical contact need not be recorded unless it causes concern, injury or complaint.

The record must include at least:

- pupil and staff names; date, time, place and approximate duration;
- the pupil's relevant circumstances, needs, SEND status code, disability, medical or communication needs;
- antecedents and known or suspected triggers; preventative and de-escalation measures attempted;
- the lawful purpose, why intervention was necessary and why less restrictive options were insufficient;
- the type and degree of force or restriction, positions used, changes during the incident and how it ended;
- injuries, distress, damage, first aid, medical assessment and other adverse impact;
- witnesses, pupil account and any available evidence;
- when and how the Headmaster, DSL and parents were informed; and
- immediate support, debrief, safeguarding decisions, plan review and follow-up actions.

No informal gaps Recording is required even where intervention is anticipated in an agreed behaviour support plan. Where one event is both restraint and a significant use of force, it is recorded once with all required information, not duplicated.

19. Written reporting to parents

The School will inform parents in writing as soon as practicable and will endeavour to do so on the same day for every significant use of force and every seclusion or restraint incident. The written report will state the date, time, place and approximate duration; why intervention was necessary; the type and degree of force or restriction; and any physical injury. It will normally invite a follow-up discussion and explain next steps.

The duty applies even where parents previously agreed a plan. If reporting to a parent appears likely to cause serious harm to the pupil, the DSL and Headmaster will record the rationale and report to any parent to whom it can safely be reported or, if none, to the local authority where the pupil ordinarily lives. Safeguarding advice will be obtained without delay. The School's pupils are under 20, so the statutory age exception is not expected to apply.

20. Review, learning and support

A senior leader will review every recorded incident promptly and confirm that legal thresholds, safety, safeguarding, notification and support requirements were met. The review will identify whether plans, adjustments, staffing, environment, timetable, curriculum, training or risk controls should change. Individual plans will be reviewed with the pupil and parents periodically and after every significant incident.

A serious incident, injury, repeated intervention, seclusion, complaint, concerning technique or evidence of disproportionality triggers a formal multi-disciplinary review led by the Headmaster or delegated senior leader with the DSL and SENCo. External professional or legal advice will be obtained where appropriate.

21. Complaints, concerns and allegations

A pupil may report concerns to any trusted adult and will be listened to, supported and protected from retaliation. Parents may use the School's Complaints Policy. A complaint does not prevent or delay safeguarding action.

Where conduct by a member of staff may have harmed a child, may constitute a criminal offence related to a child, may indicate risk of harm, or may indicate unsuitability to work with children, KCSIE 2026 allegations procedures apply and the LADO will be consulted as required. Lower-level concerns are handled under the Low-Level Concerns procedure. The Headmaster is normally case manager; where the concern is about the Headmaster, it is reported directly to the Proprietor. Suspension is not automatic and will be considered under KCSIE and employment procedures.

Staff who believe unsafe or unlawful practice has occurred must report it immediately to the Headmaster or DSL, or to the Proprietor where appropriate, and may use the Whistleblowing Policy. Records and decisions must remain confidential and be shared only on a need-to-know basis.

22. Training and competence

All staff receive policy induction and periodic refreshers on prevention, de-escalation, lawful thresholds, SEND and trauma, safe practice, emergency response, recording, parental reporting and safeguarding. Staff whose roles or pupil risk profiles make intervention foreseeable receive suitable practical training from a competent provider, with refresher arrangements and records. Training does not authorise a technique in every situation and cannot eliminate the need for dynamic judgement.

Volunteers, contractors, transport staff and trip leaders receive role-appropriate briefing. Staff must not improvise trained holds or teach techniques to others unless qualified to do so. The Headmaster reviews competence after incidents and changes in pupil need.

23. Information governance and retention

Incident records are safeguarding- and welfare-sensitive. They will be factual, contemporaneous, securely stored, access-controlled and shared only where lawful and necessary. Records are retained in accordance with the School's retention schedule, safeguarding requirements and limitation considerations. Relevant information will transfer securely when a pupil moves school where this is necessary to safeguard or support them.

24. Monitoring and governance assurance

The Headmaster provides anonymised termly assurance to the Governing Body and Proprietor. The review will consider:

- number, type, duration, location and time of incidents;
- repeat incidents, pupils and triggers; use of seclusion and non-contact restraint;
- injury, medical treatment, safeguarding referrals, complaints and allegations;
- whether reporting was same-day and records were complete;
- SEND status, disability, age, sex, race and other relevant protected characteristics, interpreted carefully where groups are small;
- effectiveness of prevention, reasonable adjustments, behaviour support plans and staff training; and
- actions, owners, deadlines and evidence that previous improvements were completed.

The Proprietor and Governing Body will not receive unnecessary identifiable pupil information. Serious or systemic concerns are escalated immediately rather than waiting for the termly report.

25. Policy review

This policy is reviewed at least annually, after a serious or recurring incident, after a complaint or safeguarding learning review, following relevant inspection findings, and whenever legislation or statutory guidance changes. The Headmaster is responsible for implementation; the Governing Body reviews effectiveness; the Proprietor approves the policy and retains legal accountability.

Appendix 1 – Staff decision and action card

Before Reduce demands and triggers; communicate calmly; offer time, space, choice and support; summon help; check the pupil's plan, medical risks and communication needs if practicable.

During Name the immediate risk; use the least restrictive lawful response for the shortest time; protect airway, breathing, circulation and dignity; monitor continuously; stop when the lawful purpose ends.

After Check health and injury; call first aid/emergency services if needed; inform the Headmaster and DSL immediately; record the same day where practicable; notify parents in writing; support pupil, staff and witnesses; debrief and review plans.

Immediate emergency indicators

- breathing difficulty, altered consciousness, collapse, seizure, chest pain or colour change;
- significant head, neck, abdominal or limb injury;
- prolonged or intense restraint, ground contact or extreme distress;
- suspected ingestion, self-poisoning or use of a weapon; or
- any doubt about medical safety.

Call 999 and begin first aid within competence. Do not delay emergency care to complete records or contact parents.

Appendix 2 – Restrictive intervention incident record

Complete as soon as practicable; staff involved should endeavour to complete it on the same day. Attach separate continuation sheets and accounts where required.

Field	Record
Pupil / year group / SEND status code	
Staff directly involved and roles	
Date / start and end time / approximate duration	
Location and activity	
Relevant needs, disability, medical, communication, trauma or other circumstances	
What happened before; known or possible triggers	
Preventative and de-escalation strategies tried and response	
Immediate risk and lawful purpose	
Why intervention was necessary and less restrictive options were insufficient	
Type of intervention; contact/non-contact; position; degree of force; changes during event	
How and why the intervention ended	
Injuries, distress, damage, first aid, medical assessment or emergency services	
Witnesses and evidence retained (including CCTV)	
Pupil account obtained/accessibility support used	
Staff and witness accounts attached	
Headmaster informed – by whom, date/time	
DSL informed; safeguarding decision/referral	
Parents informed in writing – by whom, date/time/method	
If parental notification withheld: serious-harm rationale and alternative report	

Field	Record
Post-incident support for pupil, staff and witnesses	
Debrief, plan/risk-assessment changes, actions, owner and deadline	

Appendix 3 – Senior review and assurance record

Review question	Finding / action
Was the intervention lawful, necessary, proportionate and the least restrictive option?	
Were airway, breathing, circulation, medical and dignity risks appropriately managed?	
Were prevention, de-escalation, communication and reasonable adjustments used?	
Were the pupil's SEND, disability, medical needs, trauma and other vulnerabilities considered?	
Were the Headmaster and DSL informed immediately?	
Were recording and written parental reporting completed as soon as practicable / same day?	
Were injuries, first aid, safeguarding, LADO, police, social care or RIDDOR actions considered?	
Were pupil, staff and witness accounts obtained separately and fairly?	
Was an impartial debrief offered and wellbeing support provided?	
Does the support plan, risk assessment, timetable, environment or staffing require change?	
Is practical training, supervision or competency action required?	
Does this contribute to a repeat pattern or possible disproportionality?	
Actions, owners, deadlines and completion evidence	

Senior reviewer: _____ Role: _____ Date: _____

Headmaster sign-off: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 4 – Termly governance assurance checklist

Assurance area	Evidence / finding	Action / owner / date
Records complete and timely		
Written parental reporting complete and timely		
Seclusion and non-contact restraint separately identifiable		
Injuries, safeguarding, complaints and allegations reviewed		
Repeat pupils, locations, times and triggers analysed		
SEND/disability/protected-characteristic disproportionality reviewed		
Plans and reasonable adjustments effective		
Training and competence current		
Previous actions completed and evidenced		
Immediate escalation required?		

Appendix 5 – Key references

- Department for Education, Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026).
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- Education and Inspections Act 2006, sections 93 and 93A.
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025.
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- Current EYFS statutory framework.
- Equality Act 2010; Human Rights Act 1998; Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- DfE guidance: Behaviour in Schools; Searching, Screening and Confiscation; Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools; Suspension and Permanent Exclusion; Incident Reporting in Schools.

Controlled operational records, individual plans, staff training records and named contacts are maintained internally and are not reproduced in the website edition of this policy.