USE OF REASONABLE FORCE POLICY

AREA:	EXETER HOUSE SCHOOL
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Brunel Academies Trust (BAT) is a company limited by guarantee with registration number 10074054 and registered offices at Unit B4C Orbital Retail Park, Thamesdown Drive, Swindon, SN25 4AN; BAT is the parent company and Sole Corporate Member of the subsidiary company, Brunel Education (BE) is a charitable company limited by guarantee with registration number 11991915, registered with the Charities Commission of England Wales (Charity Number 1214820) and with registered offices at Unit B4C Orbital Retail Park, Thamesdown Drive, Swindon, SN25 4AN

Tier 1 policies are centrally held policies relating to Education, Governance, People Services, Finance, ICT and Operations and are the direct responsibility of BAT. Tier 1 policies are created by the BAT Central Services Team but adopted and reviewed by the BAT Board.

We are committed to a sustainable future and to improving the social, economic, and environmental well-being of the community. We are dedicated to environmental improvements that foster a sustainable future and lead to social and economical improvements in the communities we operate within.

Amendments to policy		
Date	**Section**	**Amendment**

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1. Introduction

This policy sets out Exeter House's approach to the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, in accordance with the latest Department for Education (DfE) guidance. Brunel Academies Trust (the Trust) is committed to safeguarding the safety, dignity and wellbeing of all pupils and staff.

Restrictive interventions are recognised as high-risk and potentially distressing and will only ever be used when reasonable, proportionate, necessary and as a last resort.

Exeter House School takes a clear and consistent stance on the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force. Restrictive interventions will only ever be used as a last resort, when all other preventative and de-escalation strategies have been exhausted or are clearly inadequate in the circumstances, and only to prevent an immediate risk of harm to the pupil, other pupils, staff, or significant damage to property.

Any intervention must be reasonable, proportionate, necessary, time-limited, and in the best interests of the child. Exeter House School does not permit the use of pain-inducing techniques, prone restraint, or any method that restricts breathing, circulation, or places a pupil at unacceptable risk.

Staff are expected to prioritise trauma-informed practice, early intervention and positive relationships, and all use of restrictive interventions must comply with this policy, DfE guidance, and statutory recording and reporting duties.

Our approach prioritises:

- Early support
- De-escalation
- Trauma-informed and relationship-based practice

Restrictive interventions will only be used when it is in the best interests of the pupil and wider provision community.

This policy should be read alongside the following policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Behaviour Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Managing Allegations and Low Level Concerns Policy

And the most up to date version of:

- Use of reasonable force in schools - GOV.UK
- Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK
- Searching, screening and confiscation in schools - GOV.UK

The Co-Heads of School will ensure that staff are familiar with and correctly apply this policy. All staff are required to understand and adhere to this policy. Failure to follow the expectations, procedures and statutory duties set out in this policy may be considered a breach of professional conduct and could result in management or disciplinary action in line with the Trust policies.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

2. Definitions

For clarity, this policy uses the following terms:

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- **Restrictive intervention**: an umbrella term describing physical and non-physical actions used to prevent, restrict, or subdue a pupil's movement/liberty in order to reduce an immediate risk of harm.
- **Reasonable force**: a statutory term which includes physical restrictive interventions. "Reasonable" means no more force than necessary for the least amount of time, based on the circumstances.
- **Restraint**: a non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises or limits movement, which may occur with or without direct physical contact (depending on context and method).
- **Seclusion:** a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined away from others and prevented from leaving (by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave).
- **Significant incident**: any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between a member of staff and a pupil (see below).

3. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Ensure all staff understand when and how restrictive interventions may be used
- Ensure compliance with statutory recording and reporting duties
- Protect the rights, dignity and welfare of learners
- Reduce the need for restrictive interventions through prevention and de-escalation
- Promote a safe, inclusive and supportive learning environments
- Provide clarity for learners, parents/carers, staff and governors

4. Appropriate physical contact

Exeter House School does not operate a "no contact" policy. There are circumstances when physical contact is appropriate and does not constitute a restrictive intervention. Examples include:

- providing first aid
- guiding or escorting pupils safely
- comforting a distressed pupil
- congratulations or praise (e.g., handshake)

Any physical contact must be consistent with safeguarding expectations, the learners' needs and preferences, and professional judgement.

5. De-escalation and prevention techniques

Prevention is the primary and preferred approach to behaviour support and the management of risk. We place a clear emphasis on preventing escalation wherever possible, ensuring that early support, proactive strategies, and trauma-informed, relationship-based practice are consistently used before any form of restrictive intervention is considered.

Staff will always prioritise approaches that reduce the likelihood of distress or crisis, recognising that restrictive interventions carry inherent risk and should only be used when all preventative options have been exhausted or are clearly insufficient in an immediate situation.

Strategies implemented at provision level include, but not limited to:

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- consideration of how the provision and classroom environment can support all learners to achieve and thrive
- sharing best practice for whole-class behaviour management, and for managing communal spaces such as corridors and playgrounds
- training staff in effective communication strategies, such as using appropriate tone of voice and empathy to aid de-escalation
- development of working staff-learner relationships and trust
- recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning

Individual learner strategies include but not limited to:

- working closely with parents/carers to support individual pupils
- strategies to support individual learners based on their identified needs, including the development of behaviour support plans.
- Where a learner has a disability, provisions have a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010 to support pupils with reasonable adjustments, making sure they can benefit from what the provision offers
- giving learners time, space and strategies to calm down before their behaviour escalates

Exeter House School recognises that learners with SEND may be disproportionately affected by restrictive interventions.

We will:

- Identify triggers and unmet needs
- Make reasonable adjustments
- Co-produce behaviour support plans with parents/carers and other professionals where appropriate
- Review plans following incidents
- Implement personalised risk assessments where appropriate
- Prioritise inclusive, preventative strategies

6. Use of Restrictive Interventions (including reasonable force)

All members of staff have a legal power to use reasonable force. Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 grants staff the legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances, to prevent or stop a learner from:

- causing injury to themselves or others
- committing a criminal offence
- damaging property
- causing disorder, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

While all staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in unforeseen or emergency situations to prevent immediate risk of harm, this does not mean that all staff may carry out planned or repeated restrictive interventions.

Unplanned or emergency use of reasonable force may be used by any staff member when there is no safer option available. At Exeter House School we do not use any planned, foreseeable or risk assessed restrictive physical interventions.

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All staff receive de-escalation training and identified staff receive accredited physical intervention PBMPro training appropriate to their role. This includes ensuring at least one member of SLT is trained in accredited physical intervention training. The principles of this training is aligned with minimum force, maximum care, risk reduction and behaviour as communication.

6.1 When to use reasonable force

When determining the use of reasonable force, staff must use professional judgement, the principles of dynamic risk assessments (unforeseeable risk in fast changing situations), and formal risk assessments (identified foreseeable risks with control measures to mitigate the risk as much as possible). Staff must also determine the following.

Where foreseeable risks have been identified, a formal risk assessment must be completed and kept up to date, and the findings must be reflected in the learner's Behaviour Support Plan so that any planned use of reasonable force is clearly documented and reviewed regularly.

Is it necessary:

- Are there less restrictive options available
- Would intervention reduce risk or escalate the situation

Is it proportionate:

- Staff should use the least restrictive approach for the shortest time required
- If the intervention is escalating the situation, staff should use an alternative approach
- Staff should consider the pupil's welfare, age, size, SEND/vulnerabilities, medical needs, trauma history, communication needs, and the impact of the intervention
- Staff should maintain respect and privacy wherever possible

Restrictive interventions must never be used as punishment. None of the techniques used are: pain compliant, restricts breathing or circulation, involves pressure on the neck, chest, abdomen or joints.

Ground Holds

Grounds Holds are not used or permitted at Exeter House School and no-one is trained in the use of them

The Trust does not permit the use of prone (face-down) restraint under any circumstances, whether planned or unplanned, due to the increased risk to breathing, circulation and overall learner safety.

6.2 Use of reasonable Force to Search Pupils

Staff are authorised to search a learner or their possessions where they have grounds to suspect a learner may have prohibited items. Staff can use reasonable force to search for legally prohibited items as stated in section 550A (3) of the Education Act 1996. Staff must follow current DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools guidance. If an item is found staff will act in line with this guidance and record appropriately on our safeguarding recording system - Sleuth Monitoring System

7. Seclusion

Exeter House School does not permit seclusion to be used as a planned behaviour management strategy under any circumstances. Seclusion may only ever occur as an immediate, dynamic risk response in situations where a pupil's behaviour presents an imminent risk of harm to others and no safer alternative is available.

Any use of seclusion must be continuously supervised an appropriately trained member of staff, be time limited, and ended as soon as the risk has reduced. At no point should seclusion be used as punishment, consequence, or a predetermined response within a behaviour plan. All incidents of seclusion must be recorded, reported, and immediately reviewed in line with statutory requirements and procedures for recording behaviour incidents

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Seclusion must:

- never be used as a disciplinary response
- take place in a space that is safe and does not feel threatening or punitive
  - A properly managed space should be safe and suitable for the needs of the learner and ensure the learner is visible at all times
- involve continuous supervision
- end as soon as the immediate risk is reduced and the pupil can safely leave
- be recorded and reported in line with statutory procedures

Any such incident will be subject to immediate review (see monitoring section).

8. Recording and Reporting

All significant incidents involving use of force, and incidents of seclusion and restraint will be recorded in writing using the provision's behaviour recording system as soon as practicable, and staff should endeavour to record no later than the same day.

A member of SLT must be informed immediately after (if not appropriate to during the incident that is taking place).

Exeter House School will ensure records are in line with:

- The DfE use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions guidance
- The provision will also record and report incidents of seclusion and restraint in line with statutory duties under the Schools Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025.

Minimum recorded details include:

- learner and staff names
- learner needs/circumstances (including SEN status where relevant)
- time, date, location, duration
- what happened, triggers, prevention/de-escalation attempted
- what reasonable force/intervention/seclusion/restraint was used and why it was necessary
- injuries and medical support (if applicable)
- post-incident support and follow-up

9. Informing Parents/Carers

It is a requirement that parents/carers are informed of any significant incident involving the use of reasonable force, restraint, or seclusion, unless doing so would place the learner at risk of significant harm.

Informing parents is an essential safeguarding expectation and forms part of the provision's commitment to transparency, partnership with families, and effective post-incident support.

As per the DfE Guidance, parents/carers must be informed of a significant incident, restraint, and seclusion in writing as soon as practicable, and we will endeavour to do so no later than the same day.

Our usual practice will be to verbally raise this with parents/carers first, then follow up in writing and a follow-up discussion will be offered where appropriate.

Reporting may be withheld if telling parents/carers would likely cause significant harm to the learner (including any form of abuse or neglect). In these cases, the provision will report it to the relevant Local Authority.

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10. Post Incident Support

Following incidents involving restrictive interventions, the provision will:

- offer medical assessment where required
- conduct a structured learner debrief
- conduct a structured learner debrief with staff
- support learner and staff wellbeing (including any witnesses where relevant)
- update behaviour support plans/risk assessments as needed
- conversations to facilitate reflection and learning with learner and staff.

The debriefs and reflective conversation will be used to identify triggers, patterns and how restrictive intervention might be avoided in the future. They will also look at understanding what happened, why and repair and rebuild relationships.

11. Individual Risk Assessment

Where foreseeable risks are identified and a learner has been identified as being more likely to require the use of reasonable force interventions, the provision will develop appropriate planning and support measures including an individual risk assessment.

This will include:

- Preventative responses and strategies and reasonable adjustments
- De-escalation responses
- Agreed responses if risk escalates which may include reasonable force

Plans will be reviewed regularly (and as a minimum every 6 weeks) and after each significant incident.

12. Monitoring

A member of SLT will be notified of any significant incident, restraint and seclusion that has taken place on the same day as the incident.

An immediate review of any incident involving a ground hold, seclusion, injury and/or safeguarding concern must will take place within 24 hours of the incident to ensure timely oversight, safeguarding assurance and appropriate follow-up. Any such incident will also be reported to the Trust Safeguarding Lead.

A fortnightly review of recorded incidents will take place by the Co- Heads of School and one other member of staff to reflect on whether this could have been avoided, and if this was proportionate, necessary, and reasonable.

The Co-Heads of School will ensure the provision follows all statutory and non-statutory procedures in line with DfE guidance.

The Co-Heads of School and one other member of staff, will review and scrutinise data every 6 weeks relating to the use of force in order to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of behaviour and restraint practices, particularly where restrictive interventions are used repeatedly or over extended periods without evidence of improvement and ensure that less restrictive approaches are prioritised.
- Identify professional development and training needs for staff, ensuring they are confident in de-escalation, positive behaviour support, and the lawful use of reasonable force.
- Analyse patterns, triggers, and frequency of incidents involving individual pupils, to assess whether existing support plans are effective and to inform the development or revision of

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Behaviour Support Plans, or risk assessments, in collaboration with parents/carers where appropriate.

- Monitor for disproportionate use of restrictive interventions, particularly in relation to pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), protected characteristics, or other identified vulnerabilities, in line with equality duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Co-Heads of School will provide reasonable force, seclusion and restraint data to the Governing Body three times per year. The Governing Body will review the data thoroughly, interrogate patterns, impact of interventions, challenge disproportionality, and safeguarding compliance.

Reviews by the Co-Heads of School and another identified member of staff can be within their school setting, their link professional or a colleague from another school within the Trust to encourage reflective thinking.

Where the Co-Heads of School identifies any concerns, this should be raised with their link professional and/or Trust Safeguarding Lead

13. Appendices and Resources

To support compliance with this Policy:

- Appendix 1 is an overview of the procedure for staff to follow.
- Appendix 2 has an overview of the monitoring procedure.
- Appendix 3 is to be edited at school level to align with specific school practices.

14. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed **annually** by the Education Team. At every review, it will be approved by BAT Board of Trustees and BE Board of Trustees.

15. Links with other Policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Code of conduct Policy

This policy is adopted by the BAT Board of Trustees and will be reviewed every year or earlier if change to legislation.

Signed: CEO

Signed: Chairman of BAT Board of Trustees

Date: *Approval pending*

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This policy is adopted by Exeter House School (part of the Brunel Academies Trust) **and will be reviewed every year or earlier if change to legislation.**

Signed: Co-Headteachers

Signed: Trust Safeguarding Lead

Date: 4.10.26

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Appendix 1 – Procedure Overview

This flowchart supports school staff in making safe, lawful, and proportionate decisions when considering physical intervention. It integrates key DfE principles: prevention, de-escalation, and ensuring any use of force is reasonable, proportionate, necessary, and in the best interests of the pupil.

1. Prevention

- Anticipate potential triggers and risk factors.
- Create a calm, structured environment.
- Use proactive strategies such as positive behaviour support, adjustments, and planned interventions.
- Promote emotional regulation and consistent relationships.

2. De-escalation

- Use verbal and non-verbal calming strategies (tone, space, reassurance).
- Follow the pupil's Behaviour Support Plan.
- Offer choices, distraction, or time-out opportunities.
- Seek support from other staff if necessary.

3. Is Physical Intervention Required?

Ask yourself:

- *Is there an immediate risk of harm to the pupil or others?*
- *Is there a risk of serious damage to property?*
- *Is behaviour causing significant disruption to learning or order?*
- *What is the risk of doing something vs doing nothing?*

If **NO** to the questions above → Continue de-escalation and monitoring.

If **YES** → Proceed to step 4.

4. Reasonable, Proportionate, and Necessary

Before intervening, ensure the response meets all three criteria:

- **Reasonable**: Do only what a calm, trained adult would judge safe and appropriate.
- **Proportionate**: Use the minimum force necessary for the shortest time.
- **Necessary:** Only intervene when there is no safer or effective alternative.

5. Best Interest of the Pupil

Consider:

- Is the intervention intended to protect the pupil or others from harm?
- Could the intervention cause emotional or physical trauma?
- Would stepping back, removing others, or waiting for help be safer?

Only proceed if the action clearly protects the learner's welfare and dignity.

6. Physical Intervention

- Use approved techniques and follow training.
- Maintain communication and explain actions to the learner.
- End the intervention as soon as it is safe to do so by constantly dynamically risk assessing when to dis-engage in the best interest of the child
- Preserve safety, dignity, and calm tone throughout.

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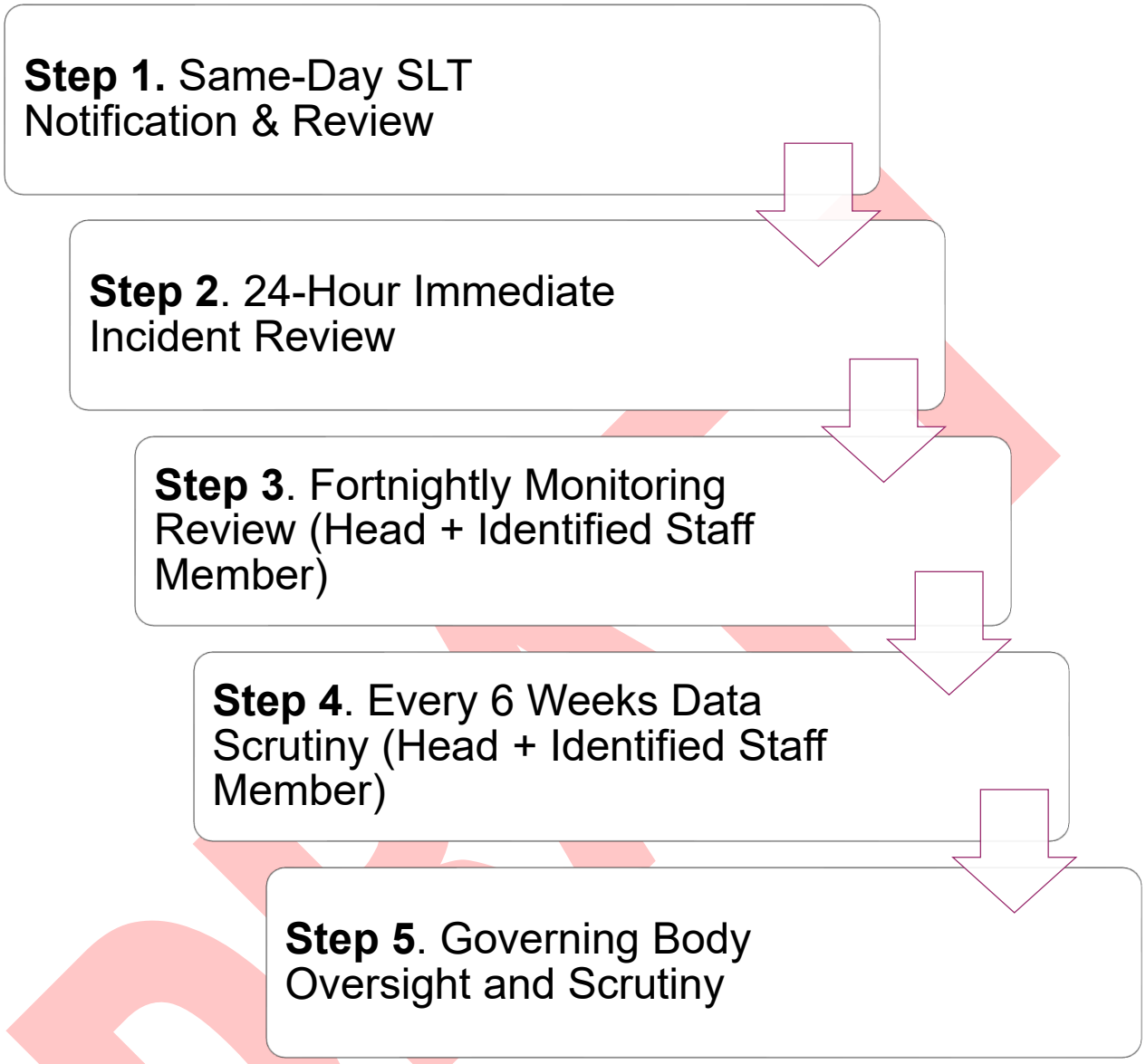
7. Aftercare and Review

- Check for injuries to pupil or staff and record if any.
- Allow debrief and emotional support for all involved.
- Inform member of SLT and parents/carers.
- Record and report the incident.
- Review patterns, triggers, and behaviour plans to prevent recurrence.
- Staff and student de-briefs completed.
- Records monitored and quality assured.

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Appendix 2 – Monitoring Procedure and Schedule Overview

To ensure consistency across all Trust provisions, the following reporting and monitoring review cycle should be used.



Appendix 3 – Non restrictive physical interventions list

All staff are trained in non-physical de-escalation practices as part of their continual CPD. This is to ensure that pupils are supported appropriately, and that any form of physical intervention is kept to a minimum.

The situations where these non restrictive physical interventions might be used include:

- Wrist, Hair or other harmful grabs
- Bites
- Neck holds
- Punches and Kicks
- Clothes grabs
- Finger grabs
- Blocks

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