



Policy document

Reasonable Force

1 Purpose & Scope

- 1.1 This policy outlines the College's approach to **restrictive interventions**, including **reasonable force** and **seclusion**, in order to ensure the safety of students and staff, minimise the use of such interventions, and comply with legal requirements.
- 1.2 This policy supports our commitment to safety, dignity, and equality and ensures adherence to legal frameworks while fostering a supportive environment for all learners in the 16–19 range.
- 1.3 This policy should be read alongside the College's [Alcohol and Substance Misuse \(Students\) Policy](#), which sets out expectations, safeguarding responses and procedures relating to alcohol and drug-related incidents involving students.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all staff. Staff should only attempt to intervene where they feel confident and safe to do so. Teams working more frequently with vulnerable students (such as Student Safety Officers, Lead Tutors and Inclusion Co-ordinators) will be targeted for training.

2 Key Definitions

- 2.1 **Restrictive Intervention:** Any action that restricts movement, physical or non-physical.
- 2.2 **Reasonable Force:** Physical intervention deemed necessary and proportionate to prevent harm or disruption.
- 2.3 **Significant Incident:** Any use of force beyond normal physical guidance.
- 2.4 **Seclusion:** Confined time-out away from others, not reliant on punishment

3 Legal and Statutory Context

- 3.1 Our policy aligns with:
 - Guidance for Schools: [‘Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools’ April 2026](#)
 - [Education & Inspections Act 2006 \(ss.93,93A\)](#)
 - [Schools \(Recording & Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint\) Regulations 2025](#)
 - [Human Rights Act 1998](#) & [Equality Act 2010](#)
 - [H&S at Work Act 1974](#)^v

4 Restrictive Interventions

- 4.1 **Use of Reasonable Force:**

All College staff have a legal power to use reasonable force when:

 - A student poses a risk to self or others
 - A student is committing a criminal offence

- There's possibility of damage to property

A student is causing disorder among other students whether during a lesson or otherwise.

4.2 Intervention is lawful only when **necessary, proportionate, and least restrictive and brief as possible.**

4.3 Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions will be adequately trained in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies. The College has a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its staff and will, therefore, carry out risk assessments where staff who work regularly work alongside students where to use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions may be required can do so as safely as possible.

4.4 Reasonable Force to Search

Reasonable force to search means the minimum physical force, used for the shortest time necessary, to enable an authorised member of staff to carry out a lawful search for prohibited items where the student refuses to cooperate and staff judge the search is necessary to prevent harm, damage to property, or serious disorder.

Senior staff and those with delegated authority have a statutory power to search a student or their possessions where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the student may have a prohibited item including:

- Knives or Weapons
- Illegal Drugs
- Stolen Items
- Alcohol
- Tobacco Products
- Vapes
- Fireworks
- Pornography

A member of staff can use such force as is reasonable to search for legally prohibited items, but not to search for items banned under the College rules only.

5 Unacceptable practices

5.1 Staff may **never**:

- Use force as punishment.
- Restrict airways, or apply pressure to neck/abdomen.
- Use highly restrictive holds or keep students prone on the ground.

5.2 The use of force can be dangerous, particularly where it occurs on the ground. If a student is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their holds or re-position into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible. Where appropriate, the student should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. For any form of restraint, including seated and standing, there is a risk of physical and psychological harm, and it should be avoided where possible.

6 Physical Contact vs. Restrictive Intervention

Acceptable non-restrictive contact includes:

- Comforting a distressed student
- Guiding students (e.g., escorting)
- Demonstrative contact for first aid or instruction.

In each case, staff must exercise judgement, respect safeguarding policies, and consider context and students' needs.

7 Seclusion

Seclusion must be:

- Used only to maintain safety when a student is highly emotionally or behaviourally dysregulated
- Conducted in a safe, non-threatening environment
- Supervised continuously
- Ended as soon as risk subsides

Seclusion must **never** be used for punishment.

8 Strategies to Minimise Restrictive Interventions

8.1 The College prioritises:

- A positive behaviour culture with clear routines
- De-escalation training in communication, emotions, and empathy
- Risk assessments and environment layout reviews
- Ongoing analysis of incident data to inform improvements and policy updates

8.2 There will be times when College staff may need to use restrictive interventions, and they should know this option may be available to them. The decision on whether it is reasonable to use a restrictive intervention depends on the individual circumstances of each situation. To make this assessment, the member of staff should consider the following:

a) **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.

b) **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 student 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.

c) **Have you considered the student's welfare?**

- Staff should consider the impact on the student's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. For example, students 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.

- Staff should seek to maintain respect for a student's dignity. This may include, where possible, considering the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.
- Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the student what is happening, why, and explain what the student needs to do.
- For students 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 student understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.
- Staff should seek to understand how the student is feeling and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

8.2 This list of factors is not exhaustive, and staff should also take into account other relevant considerations. Training on the use of restrictive interventions should equip staff to judge when it is appropriate to use restrictive interventions, including in situations where quick decisions are needed. It should also help staff understand how to assess whether their response is reasonable under pressure.

9 Support for SEND & Vulnerable Students

- 9.1** Students with SEND or other vulnerabilities may be disproportionately impacted. We will:
- Identify behavioural triggers
 - Develop individual behaviour support plans which will be reviewed with the student and their parent periodically and following any significant incident
 - Make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010
 - Ensure communications are accessible, verbal or non-verbal

10 Staff Training & Responsibilities

- 10.1** The College will:
- Provide training to staff who may need to use interventions in safe, lawful application, aligned to this policy and will ensure this is refreshed every three years
 - Equip all staff in early intervention and de-escalation
 - Conduct risk assessments for regular intervention scenarios

11 Recording & Reporting

- 11.1** **Mandatory recording:** The College is required to maintain records of all significant incidents, including seclusion:
- Details to record: date/time, staff, student(s), nature of incident, justification, duration, injuries, debrief outcomes
 - **Report incidents** to parents/carers promptly, with an offer to discuss
 - Data stored securely and used in termly governance reviews

12 Post-Incident Support & Review

- 12.1** The College will:
- Provide immediate medical and emotional support to students and staff
 - Conduct debriefs to review what worked, what didn't, and next steps
 - Update individual plans (e.g., risk assessments, behaviour plans)

13 Complaints & Safeguarding

- 13.1** If a student, parent or carer has concerns about the use of restrictive intervention including reasonable force, the College will provide guidance on how to raise a concern or complaint in line with the College's Complaints Policy. Any allegation against a member of staff will be investigated in line with the College's policy on Managing Allegations in conjunction with its Safeguarding and Complaints policies as appropriate. Any safeguarding concerns will be reported in accordance with our statutory requirements.

14 Communication & Accessibility

- 14.1** This policy will be published on the College's website and shared with College staff. The Policy will be made available in other forms on request wherever possible.

15 Governance & Accountability

- 15.1** This policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Leadership Team with significant change presented to the Local Governing Body for approval.
- 15.2** The Senior Leadership Team will review records of restrictive intervention data termly and will identify any trends and assure compliance. The Senior Leadership Team will also monitor staff training to ensure the College is meeting its duty.
- 15.3** The Local Governing Body will receive an annual report on the use of restrictive intervention, trends, training etc.

Date of review	Date agreed	JCC	Governors	Review date	Comments
April 2026	June 2026	21 May 2026	LGB 10 June 2026	April 2027	