Restrictive Interventions Policy (including the use of reasonable force)

Purpose and scope of the policy

This policy applies to all students under our care. All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force. It can also apply to people whom the Principal has temporarily put in charge of students such as unpaid volunteers or parents. Reasonable force will only be used when necessary, in accordance with this policy.

Key principles

In line with DfE guidance, at Wellacre we recognise that adopting a 'no contact' approach presents significant risks. Such a policy may place staff in a position where they are unable to fulfil their duty of care towards a student or prevent them from taking necessary action to reduce or prevent harm. This policy is therefore designed to ensure that staff, students and parents are clear about the circumstances in which restrictive intervention may be used.

When considering the use of restrictive intervention, staff must take into account the individual circumstances of the situation and consider whether the intervention is:

- **Necessary** – All less restrictive options have been explored or attempted, and the staff member reasonably believes that intervention is required to reduce the level of risk rather than escalate it.
- **Proportionate** – Only the minimum amount of force necessary is used, for the shortest duration possible, in order to reduce the risk of harm. Staff actions must reflect the student's needs, vulnerabilities, and level of distress.
- **Considered** – The student's welfare, rights and dignity must be respected at all times. Staff should use appropriate communication strategies throughout the intervention to explain what is happening, what is required of the student, and to gain feedback on how the student is feeling.

Other forms of physical contact with students

It is not illegal to touch a student. There are occasions where this is proper and necessary. Examples of this at Wellacre include:

- When comforting a distressed student;
- When a student is being congratulated or praised;
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument;
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching; and
- To give first aid

Legal Framework

This policy has been written drawing on the Department for Education Restrictive Interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026), Education and Inspections Act (2006),Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention (2019), Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for schools (July 2022), Human Rights Act (1998), Equality Act (2010), Behaviour in Schools Guidance (2024) and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)

Links to other school policies:

- Behaviour for Learning policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection policy

Definitions

Restrictive intervention: a means to prevent, restrict, or subdue the movement of the body, or part of the body, of a student. 'Restrictive interventions' is used as the umbrella term in this policy, to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain a student in different ways.

Reasonable force: includes physical restrictive interventions. All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force in limited circumstances. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time.

Restraint (physical and non-physical): involves an intervention which immobilises a student or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact. For example, holding a student's arms to their sides or removing a student's crutches would both be considered forms of restraint.

Seclusion: an intervention involving keeping a student confined to a place away from others, and preventing them from leaving.

Strategies the school uses to reduce the need for physical intervention

At Wellacre we recognise that physical intervention and the use of reasonable force can be distressing for children, their families and carers, and staff members. However, sometimes this is the only realistic response to a situation. Any decision made will consider what is in the best interest of the child and/or those around them in view of the risks presented.

In order to minimise the need for restrictive interventions, staff at Wellacre will consider the following whole school measures to support de-escalation and proactive intervention:

- consideration of how the school and classroom environment can support all students 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-student relationships and trust
- recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning

We will work in partnership with parents and individual students, where appropriate, to review and update personalised provision, ensuring that comprehensive and up-to-date information regarding effective support strategies is available to all staff (see 'Supporting students with SEND and additional vulnerabilities' for more information).

When might reasonable force be used at Wellacre:

- To prevent a child from hurting or harming themselves or others.
- To prevent a child from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- To prevent a child from committing a criminal offence.
- To prevent a student behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit.
- To prevent a student leaving the classroom where allowing the student to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others.
- To prevent a student from attacking a member of the school community.
- To stop a fight.
- To restrain a student at risk of harming themselves or others through physical outbursts.
- To support a search for knives or weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco, fireworks, pornographic images, or articles that staff reasonably suspect have been or are likely to be used to commit an offence or cause harm. **Force may not be used to search for other items banned under the school rules.**

We will never use force as a punishment under any circumstances. Restraint will never be used in a manner that restricts a student's airway, breathing, or circulation. Students should not be restrained on the ground. If a ground-level restraint occurs, staff will release their hold immediately and, where necessary, reposition the student and themselves into a safer, alternative position.

We recognise that any form of restraint carries an inherent risk of causing both physical and psychological harm. For this reason, its use will be avoided wherever possible and employed only as a last resort, when no safer or less restrictive alternative is available (see 'Post-incident support and review' for further information).

How seclusion might be used at Wellacre:

Seclusion will only be used as a safety measure to protect others from immediate harm when a student is experiencing significant emotional or behavioural dysregulation. Staff at Wellacre recognise that, in such circumstances, the student is not acting with intent but is responding to overwhelming distress.

Any location used for seclusion will feel safe for the student, and they will be supervised at all times throughout the period of seclusion. As soon as the assessed risk of harm has reduced, the student will be allowed to leave the space immediately.

Seclusion will not be implemented through threat of punishment.

Reporting and recording

At Wellacre we will follow the procedures described below for all incidents involving restrictive intervention, including the use of reasonable force and the use of seclusion. This applies equally in circumstances where specific interventions have been agreed with parents as part of a student's behaviour support plan.

At Wellacre, all incidents of restrictive intervention and physical interaction with a child are recorded on CPOMS and if necessary the '*Restrictive Interventions Recording Form*' is completed:

Restrictive Interventions Recording Form April 2026.docx

Records must be completed as soon as possible after the event, and every endeavour should be made to ensure it is completed no later than the same day. Incidents should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved. As a minimum, this record will include:

- The names of the student and staff directly involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the student, including whether the student involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code
- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention

- A brief account of the incident, including:
    - ➔ the antecedents to the use of restrictive intervention, including any identified or potential triggers
    - ➔ any preventative or de-escalation strategies used
    - ➔ the type of reasonable force applied/seclusion used, the degree of force (if used), and details of any physical injuries sustained as required
- The behaviour the student was exhibiting that resulted in the need for restrictive intervention
- Any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

We will inform parents whenever reasonable force has been used with their child as soon as practicable after the incident. A written copy of the incident record will be provided to parents and carers whenever restrictive intervention has been used with their child as soon as practicable after the incident, and wherever possible, no later than the same day.

As a minimum, the report will include:

- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- A brief account of the behaviour the student was exhibiting that resulted in the need for restrictive intervention
- A brief account of what type of force was applied/seclusion used, and the degree of force (if used)
- The details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable

Post-incident support and review

At Wellacre we evaluate and review incidents involving restrictive intervention as soon as possible after the event, to understand:

- The impact on the child/children
- What the risks were and why restraint was the least restrictive option
- What lessons we have learned to improve our practice and avoid the use of restrictive intervention in future

At Wellacre we will work collaboratively with staff, the student, and their parents/carers to review the support in place following any incident. This review will include consideration of any newly identified behavioural triggers or warning signs, the effectiveness of de-escalation strategies used, and any required amendments to the student's behaviour support plan and/or risk assessment.

Further follow-up conversations with the student and the staff involved will be undertaken to support reflection, learning, and well-being. Where possible, restorative conversations will be held to repair and rebuild relationships. Referrals for additional support will be completed as required.

Supporting students with SEND and additional vulnerabilities

Children and young people with SEND, mental health difficulties, or medical conditions may at times present with behaviour that challenges professionals, particularly when they have trouble expressing or regulating their emotions. In some cases, the likelihood of such behaviour can be anticipated by those working closely with the student.

Where the use of reasonable force or physical intervention is more likely to be required, we will ensure that robust arrangements are in place to identify, assess, and manage risk effectively. This will include providing high-quality training for staff and involving children and young people, parents, carers, and advocates as appropriate in decision-making about support. We will make arrangements to carefully assess each student's needs and the underlying causes of their behaviour, including through the development and regular review of behaviour support plans. Particular consideration will be given to children with vulnerabilities and SEND, and the school will tailor its support accordingly (as detailed in the Equality Act 2010). This may include taking into account preventative de-escalation strategies such as:

- removing stimuli that may be causing distress
- changing body language, facial expression, and/or tone of voice
- supporting the student to express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- engaging the student in an activity which can help them manage their feelings of anxiety
- distracting the student with something that interests them or by introducing familiar objects and activities to redirect their attention

In circumstances where there is an increased likelihood that reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions may be needed, staff at Wellacre will conduct a risk assessment aimed at reducing this likelihood. The risk assessment will identify potential triggers and outline planned mitigation strategies, including effective de-escalation approaches. All risk assessments and behaviour support plans will be reviewed with the student and their parent/carer at appropriate intervals to ensure they remain relevant, proportionate, and aligned with the student's evolving needs. This collaborative review process will support the student to participate fully and safely in school life.

Staff training

Schools can make their own decisions about staff training. The Principal will consider whether members of staff require any additional training (for example in restrictive interventions) to enable them to carry out their responsibilities by also considering the needs of the students and the requirements and context of the setting.

At Wellacre staff training includes training around trauma-informed approaches, relational practice and other de-escalation training.

Governance and oversight

Records of reasonable force are reviewed half termly by the Leadership Team and strategies are considered where possible to reduce the likelihood of the need for reasonable force.

To monitor, understand and review our practice we analyse our records to consider:

- Improvements to practices
- Areas of learning and development for staff
- Identified patterns and triggers for individual students, and the effectiveness of strategies employed
- Any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions in relation to students who share protected characteristics, including those with SEND

Complaints, concerns and allegations

The School will resolve all complaints regarding the use of force as quickly as possible, being mindful of the need to appropriately investigate the incident. Where a member of staff has acted within the law – that is, they have used reasonable force in order to prevent injury, damage to property, disorder or a criminal offence being committed – this will provide a defence to any criminal prosecution or other civil or public law action. When a complaint is made the onus is on the person making the complaint to prove that his/her allegations are true – it is not for the member of staff to show that he/she has acted reasonably.

Suspension will not be an automatic response to a member of staff being accused of using excessive force and the school will refer to statutory guidance in relation to this, liaising with the LADO where necessary. As employers, the school has a duty of care towards their employees and appropriate pastoral care to any member of staff who is subject to a formal allegation following a use of force incident. This will include having a named contact at the school who can provide support.

Complaints should be made in line with Wellacre's complaints policy which can be found on the school website.

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually.