



Bardwell School

Together We Thrive

Use of Reasonable Force and Physical Support Policy

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Bardwell Lead	Jade Levine

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1. Purpose and Context

This policy should be read in conjunction with the [Bardwell Behaviour and Relationships Policy](#), [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#), and individual pupil plans, including EHCPs, risk assessments and regulation profiles, alongside the [Department for Education guidance *Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force in schools \(2026\)*](#), which underpins the school's approach.

We recognise that the use of reasonable force and restrictive intervention carries inherent risk. As such, all practice at Bardwell is underpinned by a culture of professional curiosity, reflective practice and safeguarding oversight, ensuring that any use of physical intervention is continually reviewed, challenged and improved.

At Bardwell, we recognise that behaviour is a form of communication. Many pupils present with complex SEND, communication and sensory needs, and dysregulation is often linked to unmet need, anxiety or environmental factors that require careful understanding and responsive support.

Our approach is therefore relational and preventative, with a clear focus on understanding need, reducing risk and supporting regulation.

2. Legal Framework and Statutory Guidance

This policy is based on [Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006](#), alongside guidance from the [Department for Education, *Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force in schools \(2026\)*](#), and [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).

Within this framework, staff have a legal power to use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from injuring themselves or others, committing an offence, causing serious damage to property or seriously disrupting the good order of the school.

Any use of this power must be lawful, proportionate and in the best interests of the child at all times.

3. Core Principals

All practice at Bardwell is underpinned by the following principles, which guide staff decision making at all times:

Least Restrictive Principle

Staff will always use the least restrictive option available to maintain safety.

Proportionality

The level of intervention will be proportionate to the level of risk presented.

Necessity

Intervention will only be used where there is no safer alternative available.

Time Limitation

All interventions will be used for the shortest duration necessary to reduce risk.

Dignity and Respect

Pupils will be treated with dignity and respect at all times, including during incidents, with their welfare remaining central throughout.

4. Definitions

Physical Support

Low-level, non-restrictive physical contact used to guide movement, support transitions or provide reassurance, and which does not limit a pupil's freedom of movement.

Reasonable Force

The minimum force necessary to achieve a legitimate aim, such as preventing harm, and applied proportionately and for the shortest duration required.

Restrictive Intervention

Any action that restricts a pupil's movement, liberty or ability to act independently. This includes holding, blocking or preventing access to, or exit from, an area.

5. Preventions and Early Interventions

In line with the Behaviour and Relationships Policy, staff are expected to prioritise prevention and early intervention at all times.

Know the Child

Staff will follow individual regulation profiles, understand known triggers and patterns, and recognise early signs of dysregulation in order to respond proactively.

Adapt Practice

Staff will adapt their approach to meet individual need, including adjusting communication, reducing demand and providing structure and predictability.

Use De-escalation Strategies

Staff will use appropriate de-escalation strategies, including offering space and time, using calm and consistent language, removing or reducing triggers and providing sensory or regulation support.

Physical intervention must never replace effective preventative practice and should only be considered where there is an immediate risk that cannot be safely managed through these approaches.

6. When Physical Intervention May Be Used

Physical intervention may only be used where there is an immediate and significant risk, including:

- risk of injury to the pupil
- risk of injury to others
- risk of serious property damage
- risk of a pupil leaving a safe environment and placing themselves at harm

Staff must be able to clearly justify:

- why intervention was necessary
- why less restrictive options were not sufficient

7. Use Of Physical Intervention

When physical intervention is used, staff must use the least restrictive option, act proportionately to the level of risk, continuously assess the situation and stop as soon as it is safe to do so.

Staff must not use force as a form of punishment, use techniques intended to cause pain or act in anger or frustration.

Wherever possible, appropriately trained staff (for example Team-Teach trained) will lead the intervention, with additional staff supporting as required to maintain safety.

8. Seclusion, Restriction and Safe Spaces

Seclusion is defined as the enforced isolation of a pupil where they are prevented from leaving a space. This may occur where a pupil is physically prevented from exiting, where a door is held, blocked or otherwise restricted, or where staff actions or positioning prevent the pupil from leaving.

Seclusion is considered a form of restrictive intervention and must only be used as a proportionate response to immediate risk, in line with the principles set out in this policy. It is not determined by the type of space used, but by whether the pupil is free to leave.

Pupils have access to a range of safe and supportive spaces throughout the school, which they can access at any time to support regulation. These spaces form part of the school's preventative approach and are intended to reduce escalation and promote wellbeing. Where a pupil is supported to remain in a space due to safety concerns, this will be managed in line with this policy and based on dynamic risk assessment.

9. Recording and Documentation

All incidents must be recorded promptly and accurately.

Systems

Incidents will be recorded using Behaviour Watch as the primary behaviour record. CPOMS will be used where there is a safeguarding element, concern or emerging pattern requiring further oversight.

Recording Standards

All records must be factual, clear and non-judgemental, and aligned with the language and expectations set out in the Behaviour and Relationships Policy. Recording should provide a transparent and objective account of the incident.

Required Content

Records must include a clear account of the antecedent (what happened before), the behaviour observed, the intervention used, the duration of the incident, the staff involved, the outcome and any injuries sustained.

10. Parental Communication

Parents will be informed as soon as reasonably practicable following any significant incident involving physical intervention.

Communication will be factual, transparent and proportionate, avoiding blame and focusing on the child's needs, the actions taken and the outcome. It will be undertaken in a way that supports positive partnership working with families and promotes a shared understanding of how best to support the pupil moving forward.

11. Safeguarding and Oversight

All incidents involving physical intervention are reviewed by safeguarding lead, Jade Levine, monitored for frequency and patterns and used to inform ongoing planning, risk assessment and intervention.

Any concerns regarding practice will be escalated in line with safeguarding procedures and may result in further support, supervision, training or formal investigation where required.

12. Regulation Profiles

Where there is a foreseeable risk of physical intervention, the school will develop individual plans that identify known triggers, outline appropriate preventative and de-escalation strategies and set out agreed approaches to physical support.

These plans will be shared with all relevant staff and reviewed regularly to ensure they remain appropriate, effective and responsive to the pupil's needs and any emerging risks.

13. Training and Staff Support

Staff will receive appropriate training in behaviour and relational practice, alongside physical intervention training where required, and will have access to ongoing supervision and support.

Following incidents involving physical intervention, staff will be supported to engage in debrief and reflective discussion to review practice, identify learning and support staff wellbeing. Where appropriate, pupils will also be supported to reflect on incidents in a way that is developmentally appropriate and supports regulation and understanding.

Leaders are responsible for ensuring consistency of practice across the school, and for maintaining staff confidence and competence through training, guidance, supervision, reflective practice and regular review of incidents.

14. Monitoring, Evaluation and Governance

Leaders will monitor incident data across systems, identify trends and patterns and review practice regularly to ensure that approaches remain safe, consistent and effective, and that any concerns are addressed promptly.

Governors will receive regular oversight through safeguarding and behaviour reporting, enabling them to provide appropriate challenge and assurance regarding the use of physical intervention and the school's overall approach.