

Use of restrictive interventions policy

(including reasonable force and seclusion)

Diss High School

Approved by: LGB

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1. Aims and scope

At Diss High School we strive to create a safe, secure and supportive environment for all our pupils and staff. There are times when the use of restrictive interventions, including reasonable force and seclusion, is lawful and necessary to keep people safe. However, we understand that the use of restrictive interventions can have a significant impact on pupils, staff and parents/carers. In our school, they are only ever considered as a last resort, once all other prevention and de-escalation strategies have been exhausted.

This policy aims to:

- Minimise the need to use restrictive interventions, through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies
- Help school staff feel confident in knowing how to use restrictive interventions safely, appropriately and lawfully, when they are necessary
- Clearly set out the steps for recording and reporting incidents of reasonable force, seclusion and restraint
- Protect the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all pupils and staff, and help create a positive and safe place for everyone at school

This policy applies to:

- All staff employed by Diss High School
- Any third parties working with pupils on behalf of the school, such as peripatetic teachers or contracted staff
- All pupils on roll at Diss High School
- All activities or events managed by the school, whether on the school site or off-site (for example, school trips or sports fixtures)

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education (DfE) guidance on restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools. It also meets the requirements of:

- Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, inserted by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009
- Section 550ZA and section 550ZB of the Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- The Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Department for Education guidance on searching, screening and confiscation

3. Definitions

The terms used in this policy are defined as follows.

- **Restrictive interventions** are used to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of the body or part of the body. This policy uses "restrictive interventions" as the umbrella term to describe both physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain pupils in different ways.

Examples of restrictive interventions could include:

- Supervised seclusion of a pupil in an area away from others, where the pupil is prevented from leaving for their own safety and/or the safety of others
- Passive physical contact, such as a staff member blocking a pupil's path if they're running towards danger (like a busy road), or staff standing between pupils to prevent a fight

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- **Reasonable force** refers to the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to restrain children, using no more force than is needed for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

Examples of the use of reasonable force could include:

- A staff member guiding a pupil to safety by the arm
- Staff breaking up a fight between pupils
- A staff member restraining a pupil to prevent injury to the pupil, or others

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- **Restraint** is a form of non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact.

Examples could include:

- A staff member holding a pupil's arms to their sides when the pupil is attempting to harm themselves or others
- Removing a pupil's crutches

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- **Seclusion** is a non-disciplinary intervention that keeps a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevents them from leaving, for the safety of that pupil and/or others. This could be through physical obstruction or by making the pupil believe that they will be punished if they leave. For example, putting a pupil into a "holding" room until they calm down is a form of seclusion.

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- A **significant incident** is any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between a member of staff and a pupil. This includes when physical force is used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

3.1 Appropriate physical contact with pupils

Diss High School does not have a "no contact" policy. The school does not grant any requests by parents/carers or staff members not to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions.

There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to have some physical contact with pupils which does not give rise to any question over the use of reasonable force or other restrictive interventions. Examples include:

- Providing first aid to a pupil
- Guiding or escorting a pupil through the school building or on a school trip by holding their hand
- Comforting a pupil who is upset
- Offering congratulations or praise, such as with a pat on the back or handshake
- Demonstrating how to use a musical instrument
- Demonstrating exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching

In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in any given situation, staff should use their professional judgement and have regard to:

- Diss High School's child protection and safeguarding policy and other relevant policies
- The specific circumstances, such as whether there are other adults present
- Factors including, but not limited to: the pupil's age; any known vulnerabilities, including whether the pupil has SEND; and whether any alternative strategies that do not involve physical contact can be used

3.2 Seclusion

As defined above, seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention that keeps a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevents them from leaving, for the safety of that pupil and/or others.

Diss High School only uses seclusion as a safety measure when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. Seclusion is not used as a threat or punishment, and is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour. The behaviour policy sets out the school's response to misbehaviour.

During seclusion:

- The pupil will be secluded in a safe place that does not feel threatening or intimidating to them, such as the Inclusion Room or another appropriate supervised space
- The pupil will be supervised at all times by at least 1 member of staff, typically a member of the pastoral team, senior staff or another appropriate adult

As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil will be allowed to leave. Any incident involving the use of seclusion will be recorded and reported in accordance with the procedures set out in section 12.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The governing board

The governing board of Diss High School is responsible for:

- Reviewing and approving this policy
- Ensuring that a procedure is in place for recording and reporting each significant incident involving force, seclusion incident and restraint incident
- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the procedures for recording and reporting the use of force, seclusion and restraint are followed
- Regularly reviewing and interrogating data on the use of restrictive interventions in the school
- Supporting and challenging school leaders to identify where changes may be needed to practice

4.2 The headteacher

The headteacher of Diss High School is responsible for:

- Overall implementation and oversight of this policy
- Making sure that appropriate and high-quality training on preventative strategies and the safe and lawful use of restrictive interventions is provided for staff who need it, based on the school's context and needs
- Ensuring adequate staffing levels to support positive behaviour management
- Monitoring incidents involving restrictive interventions, including regular review of incidents to refine and improve processes
- Ensuring compliance with recording and reporting requirements
- Authorising staff to search a pupil or their belongings if they have good reason to think the pupil has a prohibited or banned item
- Following the procedures set out in the complaints policy to deal with complaints about the use of restrictive interventions
- Following the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education if an allegation regarding inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive intervention is made against a member of staff

4.3 All staff

All members of staff at Diss High School are responsible for:

- Making sure they have read and understood the principles of this policy and any other linked policies
- Using de-escalation techniques and positive behaviour management strategies to try to minimise and prevent the need for restrictive interventions

- Accurately recording every seclusion incident, restraint incident and significant incident involving force that they are involved in
- Reporting these incidents to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL)
- Recording any injuries that occur as part of an incident involving restrictive intervention, and following the health and safety policy to ensure these are reported to the Health and Safety Executive where necessary
- Taking part in training on preventative strategies and the safe and lawful use of restrictive interventions, if relevant to their role
- Engaging in follow-up conversations to debrief and reflect on incidents involving restrictive intervention that they were involved in

4.4 Designated safeguarding lead (DSL)

At Diss High School the DSL (or a deputy DSL) is responsible for:

- Reporting every seclusion incident, restraint incident and significant incident involving force to each parent/carer of the pupil involved, unless to do so would place the pupil at risk of significant harm
- Making sure records are kept securely and in accordance with safeguarding and data protection procedures
- Contacting the local authority in cases where informing a pupil's parent/carer of the use of reasonable force, seclusion or restraint on their child would put that child at risk of significant harm

4.5 Special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO)

The SENCO at Diss High School is responsible for:

- Working with pupils, parents/carers and relevant school staff to develop and review behaviour support plans and risk assessments for pupils with SEND where there is an increased likelihood of the need to use restrictive interventions
- Ensuring staff are aware of individual pupil needs and associated behaviour support strategies
- Working with staff who know pupils well, to identify and manage risk (such as trigger points when challenging behaviour is more likely to occur)
- Working with pupils, parents/carers, staff and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies
- Advising on reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities when considering prevention and de-escalation strategies
- Participating in the review of restrictive intervention incidents involving pupils with SEND
- Providing advice and support on the application of this policy for pupils with SEND
- Contributing to staff training on SEND and behaviour management, including the use of restrictive interventions

5. Acceptable uses of force

All Diss High School staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain situations. Staff can use reasonable force to prevent or stop a pupil from:

- Hurting themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence
- Damaging property
- Causing disorder among pupils, in or out of lessons

While all staff have this power, some staff, especially those who work closely with pupils who might show challenging behaviour, are more likely to need to use it than others. Diss High School will ensure staff are adequately trained and that risk assessments are carried out where necessary.

Any significant incident involving the use of force will be recorded and reported in accordance with section 12 of this policy.

6. Unacceptable uses of force

It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment, and Diss High School never uses force as a sanction, threat or deterrent. Staff understand that any form of force or restraint carries a risk of physical and psychological harm, so these measures are always avoided where possible.

The following uses of force are never acceptable:

- Using force for the purpose of punishment
- Restraining a pupil in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation
- Using force on the ground; if a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their hold or move into a safer position as quickly as possible

7. Using reasonable force to search pupils

The headteacher and any member of staff authorised by the headteacher have a statutory power to search a pupil or their belongings if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item (as listed in the DfE's searching, screening and confiscation guidance) or an item banned under the school rules.

Staff can use reasonable force to search for prohibited items such as knives, weapons, stolen items or illegal drugs, but cannot use reasonable force to search for items that are banned under school rules only, such as mobile phones.

The decision to use reasonable force to carry out a search should be made carefully, on a case-by-case basis and taking into consideration the level of risk to pupils and staff. The school's behaviour policy sets out further information on how searches are conducted.

8. Prevention and de-escalation strategies

Restrictive intervention is used only when necessary and Diss High School aims to minimise its use through both whole-school and individual approaches.

Whole-school approaches include:

- Considering how the school and classroom environment can support all pupils 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
- Developing strong staff-pupil relationships and trust
- Recording and analysing data on the use of restrictive interventions to inform improvement planning

Individual approaches include:

- Working closely with parents/carers to support individual pupils
- Strategies to support pupils based on their identified needs, including behaviour support plans, early calming strategies and reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities

8.1 De-escalation when a situation arises

When a staff member is faced with a situation where a restrictive intervention may need to be used, they should consider using de-escalation techniques first, wherever possible.

Techniques that could be used in these situations include:

- Having open body language and being aware of a pupil's personal space
- Taking a pupil away from an "audience" and speaking to them on their own
- Using empathy – asking the pupil to help staff understand their feelings
- Distraction techniques
- Offering a calm space for the pupil to go to so they can self-regulate
- Verbal warnings – calmly reminding the pupil of the consequences of their behaviour

9. Deciding when the use of restrictive interventions is appropriate

9.1 Necessity and proportionality

The decision on whether to use restrictive interventions is down to the professional judgment of the staff member and will always depend on the individual circumstances of each situation. Staff should always consider whether there are other ways to manage the situation, such as de-escalation techniques or seeking assistance from a colleague.

When assessing whether a restrictive intervention is required, staff should always consider:

- **Is it necessary?** – Are there other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage the situation? Is a restrictive intervention likely to successfully reduce the risks, or could its use escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself?
- **Is it proportionate?** – Staff should use the least amount of force or the least restrictive intervention for the least amount of time required to reduce the risks. If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy. Staff should consider the individual circumstances of the pupil, such as their age, size and any medical conditions, SEND or other vulnerabilities.

9.2 Pupil and staff welfare

Pupil welfare

The most important consideration when using a restrictive intervention is the safety and wellbeing of the pupil involved, as well as the safety of other pupils and staff. Staff should always consider the potential impact on the pupil's welfare balanced against any actions taken. For example, staff should bear in mind that pupils who have experienced adverse life events, trauma or neglect, or who have diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, communication difficulties or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.

If a restrictive intervention is needed, staff should always aim to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity. This includes consideration of the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.

Staff should, wherever possible, clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and what the pupil needs to do, including using verbal and non-verbal strategies where needed, and giving time for the pupil to process information and respond where appropriate.

Staff should seek to understand how the pupil is feeling and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

Support following an incident

As soon as possible after any use of restrictive intervention, Diss High School will evaluate the incident to understand why restrictive intervention was used, the impact on pupils and staff, any patterns and trends, and how another incident could be avoided in the future.

The school will make sure each pupil and staff member involved get the right support, including a medical assessment and treatment if needed, and an opportunity to reflect on and talk through the incident.

This follow-up conversation will be part of the overall debriefing process to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from all parties involved. Conversations should also aim to repair and rebuild relationships through dialogue.

Wherever possible, this process will be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident. It may also include the presence of an additional person to ensure impartiality and support. The school will continue to monitor pupil and staff wellbeing and provide additional support if needed.

Depending on the circumstances, support may also be offered to those who witnessed the incident.

10. Considerations for pupils with SEND

Diss High School understands that pupils with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Pupils who have difficulty communicating verbally might show their needs and discomfort through their actions.

The school is committed to understanding what might trigger challenging behaviour in pupils with SEND and to providing the right support and an inclusive environment.

Risk assessments will be carried out for pupils with SEND, where there is an increased likelihood of needing to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions. The school is aware of its duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities to avoid disadvantage and ensure they can take part in school life as fully as possible.

Staff who know individual pupils well will be utilised to help identify and manage risk, such as trigger points when challenging behaviour is more likely to occur, and develop proactive strategies to reduce the likelihood of restrictive interventions being used. The school will also work with the pupil, their parents/carers and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies.

These strategies might include:

- Removing stimuli that may be causing distress to the pupil
- Staff members changing how they communicate with the pupil, such as being more mindful of body language, facial expressions and/or tone of voice
- Helping the pupil express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- Engaging the pupil in activities to help them regulate their emotions
- Distracting the pupil with familiar objects or activities to redirect their attention

Where appropriate, individual behaviour support plans will be created for pupils with SEND. The plan will be reviewed regularly, and following any significant incident, with the pupil and parents/carers to make sure it's still working well. The plan will:

- Outline any adjustments, such as to address aspects of the school environment which the pupil finds challenging
- Explain the best ways to communicate with the pupil
- In some cases, specify when increased physical contact with staff might be appropriate. These situations will be discussed with everyone involved and clearly written down in the plan

11. Training and risk assessments

Diss High School will make sure that all staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions are adequately trained in their safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies.

The school also has a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff. Therefore, risk assessments are carried out to ensure that staff who regularly work alongside pupils where the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions may be required can do so as safely as possible.

12. Recording and reporting arrangements

Diss High School has a legal duty to record and report all:

- Significant incidents involving force
- Seclusion incidents
- Restraint incidents

12.1 Recording incidents

The school has a clear process in place for recording these incidents. Staff must record incidents in writing, as soon as possible after the event, and should endeavour to do this on the same day. Staff should do this even if the use of restrictive interventions is agreed as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

At Diss High School, staff will:

- Record all significant incidents involving force, seclusion incidents and restraint incidents on CPOMS using the appropriate incident category
- Notify the DSL (or deputy DSL) and the relevant member of the senior leadership team that a restrictive intervention has taken place
- Complete any additional internal forms required for monitoring purposes, where applicable

For significant incidents involving force, records will include:

- The names of the pupil and staff members directly involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether they have an identified special educational need or disability, and their SEN status code
- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- A clear and brief description of what happened, including: what led up to the incident; any known or potential triggers for the behaviour; any preventative or de-escalation strategies used; the type and degree of reasonable force used; details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- A brief explanation of why using force was assessed as necessary in that situation

- Details of any support given after the incident, such as medical help or emotional support

For seclusion incidents and restraint incidents, records will include:

- The names of the pupil and staff members directly involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether they have an identified special educational need or disability, and their SEN status code
- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- A brief explanation of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that situation
- Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- Details of any support given after the incident, such as medical help or emotional support

Note: if a seclusion or restraint incident also constitutes a significant incident involving force, it will be recorded in line with the procedure for recording significant incidents involving force. It does not need to be recorded twice.

Completed reports will be kept securely and retained in line with the school's data protection procedures.

12.2 Reporting incidents to parents/carers

Diss High School will inform parents/carers about an incident as soon as possible after it happens and will endeavour to do this on the same day. This will be done even if the use of restrictive interventions is agreed as part of a pupil's behaviour support plan.

The usual process will be:

- The staff member involved logs the incident on CPOMS and alerts the DSL or a deputy DSL
- The DSL or a member of the senior leadership team reviews the record to ensure procedures were followed
- A member of staff, usually the DSL, headteacher or a designated pastoral leader, contacts parents/carers by phone and/or the school's usual communication system (email or messaging) and provides written confirmation of the key details

There is 1 exception to this:

- If a member of staff thinks that telling the pupil's parents/carers would likely result in significant harm to that pupil. In these cases, the incident will be reported to any parent(s)/carer(s) who it can be reported to without resulting in significant harm or, if there are none, to the local authority where the pupil ordinarily resides (see section 12.3)

When reporting **significant incidents involving force** to parents/carers, the following details will be included:

- The time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- A brief explanation of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that situation
- A short description of the type and degree of force that was used

- Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable

When reporting **seclusion incidents and restraint incidents** to parents/carers, the school will provide parents/carers with a copy of the written record of the incident.

Note: if a seclusion or restraint incident also constitutes a significant incident involving force, it will be reported in line with the procedure for reporting significant incidents involving force. It does not need to be reported twice.

When reporting to parents/carers, the school will have regard to data protection requirements when deciding what information to share. For example, identifying details of any other pupil will not be included.

Following up with parents/carers after an incident

Where appropriate, parents/carers will be invited to have a follow-up discussion about the incident. The discussion might include:

- Any behavioural triggers or warning signs of an impending incident
- Whether any agreed behaviour support plans were followed
- What de-escalation strategies were used and how effective they were
- What might be done differently in the future

12.3 Reporting incidents to the local authority

In cases where the school has assessed that an incident needs to be reported to the local authority where the pupil ordinarily resides (as outlined in section 12.2), this report will include all the information that would normally be shared with the pupil's parents/carers, as well as the reasons why it was thought unsafe to tell the pupil's parents/carers directly.

In cases where a pupil has parents/carers and is the subject of a care order under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 or is being accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, the incident will be reported to the relevant local authority in addition to the parents/carers (unless it is deemed unsafe to inform the parents/carers, as set out in section 12.2).

13. Complaints and allegations

Any complaints about the use of restrictive interventions will be handled through Diss High School's complaints policy, which is available on the school website or from the school office.

Any allegation of inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions made against a member of staff will be taken very seriously. Allegations will be dealt with in line with the statutory safeguarding guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education.

14. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the headteacher. At every review, this policy will be approved by the full governing board of Diss High School.

15. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following Diss High School policies and procedures:

- Behaviour policy
- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Complaints policy
- Health and safety policy
- SEND policy