

Restrictive Intervention (including the use of reasonable force) Policy 2026

At Link Academy Trust, our vision is clear:

Flourishing schools for all at the heart of our communities.

Inspired by, ***“Life in all its fullness” (John 10:10)***, we strive to create environments where every individual can thrive.

Our mission is underpinned by three core values that guide everything we do:

- **Belonging** – Every interaction matters; we nurture relationships and ensure everyone feels valued and included.
- **Curiosity** – We embrace ambition, creativity, and innovation to inspire lifelong learning.
- **Collaboration** – We foster an open culture of accountability and shared success, working together for the benefit of all.

These principles shape our approach to equality and diversity, ensuring that every policy, decision, and action reflects our commitment to inclusion and excellence.

Restrictive intervention (including the use of reasonable force) Policy 2026

The Link Academy Trust (the Trust) is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity, regulated by the Department for Education (DfE). All Members of the Board of Trustees of the exempt charity are also Directors of the company; the term 'Trustee' used in this Policy also means Director. This Policy applies to all academies within the Trust.

The Trustees and LACs (Local Advisory Committees) will act in accordance with Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 and the most current Government guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils¹ at the academies within the Trust.

The Trust recognises the updated DfE guidance *Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force in schools (2024)*, which emphasises that restrictive intervention must only be used:

- As a last resort,
- When absolutely necessary,
- Or the shortest possible time, and
- In a way that minimises the risk and preserves dignity

Restrictive intervention must never be used as a punishment, for disciplinary purposes, or to force compliance where there is no immediate risk.

Introduction

Academies within the Trust take the safety and welfare of all pupils seriously. This policy has been written to ensure that, should the situation arise, staff and parents are aware of the correct procedures in the use of reasonable force to restrain or physically direct a child; this will be taken as a last resort when there is no realistic alternative. The policy also aims to ensure staff understand that any actions they take need to be reasonable, proportionate and absolutely necessary.

The policy should be considered alongside:

- Behaviour policy and Relational Approach statement of Intent
- Exclusions and Suspension Policy
- Health and safety policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Equalities Policy

Definitions (DfE 2026)

Restrictive intervention refers to any act that restricts a pupil's movement liberty or freedom to act independently. This includes physical restraint, mechanical restraint, and seclusion.

Physical restraint is the use of physical contact to limit a pupil's movement.

Seclusion (locking a pupil alone in a room they cannot leave) is **not permitted** in academies and must never be used as a behaviour management strategy.

Time-out and **withdrawal** remain permitted when used appropriately and not as a form of seclusion.

A relational approach to supporting a positive climate in Trust settings

All academies in the Trust have taken part in training into the Relational Approach which is a framework where staff understand the reasons for dysregulation and that the way we respond can escalate or de-escalate a difficult situation. Research shows that positive physical intervention involving gentle, appropriate touch can have a beneficial impact on stressed out or dysregulated children, often preventing escalation and the need for exclusion or isolation. A "no touch policy" would be depriving to children who need to be soothed and calmed so we do not adopt this. However, this is different to the use of physical restraint that is covered in this policy.

The stages in the Relational Approach that are key to reducing the need for Physical handling are:

- Developing Relationships
- Responding and Calming
- Repairing and Restoring.

Strong and positive professional relationships between staff, pupils and parents are vital to ensure a calm and purposeful environment. It is recognised that the majority of pupils in our academies follow the schools' expectations and remain regulated and focussed throughout the school day.

Unhelpful, harmful or challenging behaviour is usually the result of strong emotions which have been triggered in the moment. To maintain a calm learning environment and to support children to process their feelings and emotions, we need to be able to regulate them in the moment and provide them with experiences which will assist the development of regulation.

It is also acknowledged that some children find it more difficult to self-regulate. These children will require a more tailored approach, are likely to require a co-regulation plan

and risk assessment. In some circumstances, staff may need to take action and the use of physical contact may be required. In these situations, the Trust uses Devon's Passive Intervention and Prevention (PIPS) approach. Further information can be found following this link.

[Passive Intervention and Prevention Strategies \(PIPS\) - Support for schools and settings \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/active/passive-intervention-prevention-strategies-pips-support-schools-settings)

Minimising the need to use Restrictive Intervention: De-escalation Strategies

Staff must always consider the **least restrictive option** and use **proactive, preventative approaches** wherever possible.

Restrictive intervention must only be used when:

- There is **immediate risk of harm** to the pupil or others, or
- There is a **serious and significant risk of damage to property**, or
- The pupil's behaviour causes risk of harm and serious disruption with safety implications and no other strategy is viable.

Staff must be able to demonstrate that **all reasonable alternatives** were considered and/or attempted. They need to be aware of strategies and techniques for dealing with challenging pupils and steps which they can take to defuse and calm a situation. We recommend that sufficient staff are trained in PIPS to meet pupil needs and we offer this training annually. Ideally this will be a senior member of staff and an HLTA or experienced TA who are employed full time. It is the responsibility of the Academy Head (alongside the trained staff members) to cascade key elements of the training and ensure all staff have a basic understanding of dysregulation strategies, but if not trained they can only use restrictive intervention in an emergency and it must still be reasonable, proportionate and necessary.

Before using restrictive intervention always consider the following:

- Have you exhausted non-physical methods of intervention?
- Have you had regard for the pupil's level of understanding and age?
- As far as possible, have you made your intentions clear to the child?
- Where possible, have you discussed and agreed in advance with parents/carers the range of acceptable responses to their son/daughter's challenging conduct? (However, we recognise that sometimes a behaviour can be unexpected, therefore will not have discussed it with parents.)
- How important is the outcome? Does the benefit of achievement involving physical intervention outweigh not achieving without physical intervention occurring?
- Is there another adult present to support or as a witness?
- Have you had appropriate PIPS training?

The use of the following may exclude the need for physical intervention.

- Show care and concern by acknowledging unacceptable behaviour and requesting alternatives using negotiation, reason and distraction.
- Give clear directions for pupils to stop using simple, clear statements.
- Speak and move calmly and confidently. Be aware that staff's body language and words or own mood can escalate a situation or calm it down.
- Well-chosen language is used to de-escalate situations.
- Remove an audience from the immediate location or take other pupils to a safer place.
- Make the environment safer by moving furniture and removing objects which could be used in aggression.
- Ensure that colleagues know what is happening and get help before the problem escalates.
- 'Planned ignoring' - considering what needs intervention and which to ignore
- Make limited demands of the child
- Showing interest - a student may be diverted from misbehaviour if an adult shows interest in the task
- Offering help when the pupil is about to become frustrated
- Changing activities or the adult - when tension mounts or interest flags
- Distraction – refocusing attention to a new task or situation

Circumstances in which Restrictive Intervention may be used:

Restrictive intervention should be avoided wherever possible and where it is needed, for example where pupils with complex challenges present a risk to themselves and others, it must be in the best interest of the child and should be only the minimum required.

There are times when restrictive intervention is necessary but it must be used in ways that maintain the safety and dignity of all concerned as far as this is possible.

The updated DfE guidance (2026) and Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 under the heading Power to Restrain Pupils, allows teachers and other authorised staff of a school to use restrictive intervention only when absolutely necessary to:

- prevent a pupil from harming themselves or others;
- prevent serious damage to property;
- Prevent behaviour that is seriously disrupting learning or compromising safety;
- Prevent a pupil from leaving a space when doing so would place them at immediate risk

Restrictive intervention must never be used to:

- Force compliance;
- Respond to verbal disrespect;
- Punish or cause pain;
- Respond to low-level disruption

Prohibited Practices (DfE 2026)

The following practices are not permitted under any circumstances:

- Seclusion
- Mechanical restraint (eg straps, belts, ties)
- Pain-inducing techniques
- Restrictive intervention used as a punishment
- Restrictive intervention used for staff convenience
- Restrictive intervention used to force compliance where no immediate risk exists.

Training of staff

The Trust believes that good training for restrictive intervention is vital. Training must include:

- understanding of the law and DfE guidance;
- trauma-informed practice;
- safe, non-pain-inducing physical intervention techniques;
- recognising and responding to medical vulnerabilities;
- recording and reporting requirements.

All school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force where it is necessary and proportionate to prevent harm. However, the Trust expects that staff who may need to use restrictive intervention as a part of their role receive appropriate training.

Staff who are not trained should only use restrictive intervention in an unforeseeable emergency, where immediate action is required to prevent harm. In such cases, the intervention must still be reasonable, proportionate, necessary, and in link with this policy.

Recording and Reporting

For children who have a co-regulation plan, the guidance of how PIPS can be used will be recorded in this plan. Plans are written, shared and agreed with parents/carers. PIPS may be, for example, holding a hand, or placing a hand on a child's back to guide them to a safer space.

All restrictive interventions must be recorded on the same day and reported to parents as soon as reasonably practicable, and no later than the same day. This information MUST be shared with the Academy Head uploaded to CPOMS. Records must include:

- Justification for the intervention;
- Alternatives attempted
- Type of intervention used;
- Duration;
- Staff involved;
- Injuries or medical concerns;
- Pupil voice, including the pupil's views, and reflections following the incident where appropriate to their age and understanding;
- Follow-up actions

There is an expectation that the Academy Head will review all incidents and identify patterns, training needs, or safeguarding concerns.

The Trust and Local Advisory Committees will receive regular reports on the use of restrictive intervention, enabling oversight of frequency, patterns, and any disproportionate impact on particular groups of pupils, including those with SEND. This oversight supports accountability, identifies training needs, and ensures that practice remains consistent with DfE guidance.

Safeguarding considerations

The use of restrictive intervention is a safeguarding matter. All incidents must be considered in line with the Trust's Safeguarding Policy

Any concerns that a restrictive intervention may have been inappropriate, excessive, or has resulted in injury must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and recorded as a safeguarding concern.

Patterns of repeated use with an individual pupil must be reviewed to ensure that the pupil's needs are being appropriately met and that practice remains safe, proportionate, and in the child's best interests.

Post incident support

The Trust is aware that the use of restrictive intervention is challenging and can be upsetting. Following an incident, the Academy Head will ensure individuals involved are supported. This includes pupils, who must be offered a supportive debrief that helps them understand what happened, restores relationships, and identifies triggers, parents/carers who should be invited to contribute to post-incident reviews where appropriate and staff who will be offered supervision. Pupils should be supported, where appropriate, to contribute to reviews and planning to help reduce the likelihood of future incidents.

Risk Assessment, Relational Support Plans and Co-regulation Plans:

Where a child presents an ongoing risk to self and others, a risk assessment will be written, and relational support plan developed. For children who are specifically struggling with regulation, it is appropriate to have a consistent response or strategy including a script as to how we best co-regulate the child. They will need different relational and empathic responses at different stages of regulation. A personalised co-responsive regulation plan is a good system for agreeing this shared response so that all adults working with the child have a good understanding of their needs and that there is a consistent response.

Some crises situations arise unexpectedly and there may not be a specific plan in place, however every academy must have general guidelines in place as to how to make the situation safe in the moment and what needs to happen following the incident. Staff should receive staff training to ensure this is effectively in place.

If we become aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a dysregulated way that may require the use of PIPs, it is our intention to plan how to respond. Such planning needs to address:

- Supporting the pupil (e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict, holds to be used if necessary);
- Involving the parents/carers and pupils (where appropriate) to ensure that they are involved in the development & review of plans
- Briefing staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training or guidance);
- Ensuring that additional support can be called upon if appropriate;
- If Restrictive Intervention is likely to be necessary, this should be included in the pupil's provision together with de-escalation strategies, the manner in which the pupil may be held, how support will be requested and any medical factors to be considered.
- Additional staff may need to be alerted to offer a 'change of face'

Medical considerations

Staff must consider any medical conditions that may increase risk during restraint, including:

- Asthma
- Epilepsy
- Heart conditions
- Respiratory vulnerabilities
- SEND-related physical vulnerabilities

These must be included in the pupil's risk assessment and co-regulation plan.

The Trust's Restrictive Intervention (including the use of reasonable force) Policy will be discussed, reviewed and updated by annually. This Policy will be reviewed by the Standards & Curriculum Committee annually and approved by the Board of Trustees.

Policy reviewed by Standards & Curriculum: June 2021

Date approved by the Board of Trustees: 12 July 2021

Reviewed by Standards & Curriculum: 14th June 2023

Approved by Board of Trustees: 10th July 2023

Reviewed by Standards & Curriculum: 9th July 2024

Approved by Board of Trustees: 22nd July 2024

Reviewed by Standards & Curriculum: 8th July 2025

Approved by Board of Trustees: 14th July 2025

Reviewed by Standards & Curriculum: 7th July 2026

Approved by Board of Trustees: 13th July 2026

Next Review: Summer 2027

Appendix 1

[DfE 2026 - Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools](#)

Appendix 2

PIPS recording form

This must be completed on the day of the incident and be reported on CPOMS within 24 hours with this form attached.

PHYSICAL INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Pupil	Class	Date	Time of incident
Reported by Adults involved (names and roles) Others present (names)			
Where in setting did this take place? 			
What led up to the incident? 			
What steps did you take to de-escalate prior to the physical intervention Warning ☐ Reassurance ☐ Choice ☐ Divert ☐ Instruction ☐ Ask to stop ☐ Distract ☐ Humour ☐			
Brief factual summary of what exactly happened and approx. length of time hold was used for. Were there pupil or adult witnesses? 			
Reasons for intervention Actual injury to self ☐ Potential injury to staff/pupil ☐ Actual injury to staff/pupil ☐ Potential damage to property ☐ Actual damage to property ☐ Attempting to leave the site ☐ Potential injury to self ☐ Other			

Why was it in the child's best interest to intervene?

Restrictive intervention strategies used:

Lap over ☐ Safe wrist hold ☐ Safe wrist hand hold ☐ Safe double wrist hold ☐

Sitting ☐ Kneeling ☐ Standing ☐

Pupil debrief ☐ Staff debrief ☐ Parents/Carers advised ☐

Date:

Time

INCIDENT DEBRIEF

Possible triggers:

Possible escalating factors:

Possible de-escalating factors/subsequent behaviour:

Has a Co-Regulation Plan been written/reviewed? If not, this should be agreed as a priority outcome.

Resolution – outcome (How a similar incident could be managed in future):