



**ST TERESA
of CALCUTTA**
Catholic Academy Trust

St Gabriel's
Roman Catholic High School

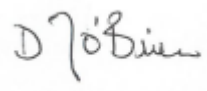


**STRENGTH
SERVICE
SUCCESS**

St Gabriel's RC High School

Positive Handling and Reasonable Force Policy



Time of review: 1 st October 2026	Time of next review: 1 September 2027
Author:	
 Signed: _____ Date: 08/10/2026	
Headteacher: Mr Braithwaite	
 Signed: _____ Date: 3rd October 2026	
Approved by the Local Governing Body	
 Signed by Chair of Governors: _____ Date: 09/10/2026	

Our Mission Statement

At St Gabriel's, we are an **inclusive Catholic family** who embrace diverse identities, faiths and beliefs. We strive to use our God-given talents to **serve** others and to **succeed**. The Lord is our **strength**, which inspires us to make positive contributions to our school community and be valued members of our global society.



Review cycle Annually and following any significant incident or material change in legislation/guidance

1. Purpose and Legal Framework

1.1 Purpose

St Gabriel's RC High School is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment in which pupils are protected from harm and treated with dignity.

This policy sets out when and how staff may use appropriate physical contact, reasonable force or other restrictive interventions to protect pupils, staff, other people or property. The school will always seek to **prevent, reduce and de-escalate** situations that may lead to physical intervention.

Any use of force must be:

- lawful and necessary;
- reasonable and proportionate to the circumstances;
- the least restrictive response reasonably available;
- for the shortest time necessary;
- consistent with safeguarding and equality duties;
- respectful of the pupil's dignity and welfare; and
- recorded, reported and reviewed where required.

This policy does **not** require staff to use force. Decisions about intervention remain matters of professional judgement based on the circumstances at the time.

1.2 Legal and statutory framework

This policy has due regard to relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, particularly sections 93 and 93A;
- Education Act 1996, including statutory provisions concerning searching pupils;
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025, applicable from April 2026;
- DfE, *Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools* (April 2026);
- DfE, *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026* (KCSIE);
- DfE, *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026*;
- DfE guidance on behaviour in schools;
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years; and
- relevant local safeguarding partnership and LADO procedures.

1.3 Related school policies

This policy should be read alongside the:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct/Staff Behaviour Policy;
- Allegations Against Staff and Low-Level Concerns procedures;
- SEND Policy;
- Complaints Policy;
- Health and Safety and First Aid Policies;
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy; and
- individual Behaviour Support Plans and risk assessments.



2. Scope and Key Principles

This policy applies to all school staff and to pupils on school premises or elsewhere when staff have lawful control or charge of pupils, including school trips and other school-led activities.

The school does **not** operate a "no contact" policy. Appropriate physical contact may be necessary for first aid, guiding or escorting a pupil, comforting a distressed pupil, supporting regulation, teaching or protecting pupils from harm. The 2026 DfE guidance specifically states that schools should have sensible policies allowing appropriate physical contact.

The following principles apply:

1. The safety, welfare and dignity of pupils and staff are paramount.
2. Physical intervention must never be used as punishment, humiliation, intimidation, retaliation or out of anger or frustration.
3. Prevention and de-escalation should be used wherever reasonably practicable.
4. Reasonable force means no more force than is necessary, applied for the shortest time necessary.
5. Staff must consider the pupil's age, size, SEND, disability, medical conditions, communication needs, mental health, sensory needs, trauma and other vulnerabilities.
6. Reasonable adjustments must be made in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
7. Intervention must stop as soon as the relevant risk has reduced sufficiently.
8. Staff should seek assistance where reasonably practicable.
9. Staff who make reasonable professional decisions in difficult circumstances will be supported by the school.
10. Any concern about inappropriate, excessive or unlawful force will be dealt with through safeguarding and allegations procedures.
11. Incidents will be reviewed to identify learning, patterns, training needs and opportunities to prevent recurrence.

3. Definitions and When Force May Be Used

3.1 Positive handling

"Positive handling" is the school's operational term for appropriate physical intervention used to protect a pupil, another person, property or the orderly running of the school.

It is not a separate legal power. Where legislation or statutory guidance refers to **reasonable force**, **restraint or restrictive intervention**, those legal definitions apply.

3.2 Reasonable force

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 permits a member of school staff to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a pupil:

- causing injury to themselves or another person;
- committing an offence;
- damaging property; or
- causing disorder among pupils at the school.

The power applies on school premises and, where staff have lawful control or charge of a pupil, elsewhere. There is no fixed amount of force that is always reasonable. The circumstances, risks, pupil's individual needs and available alternatives must be considered.

3.3 Restrictive intervention and restraint

A **restrictive intervention** is an intervention intended to prevent, restrict or subdue movement of a pupil or part of their body.

Restraint is a non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises a pupil or limits their movement. It may involve physical contact or other means of restriction.



3.4 Seclusion

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary safety intervention involving keeping a pupil away from others and preventing them from leaving.

Seclusion may only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm where a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. It must never be used as punishment or through the threat of punishment. The pupil must be supervised and allowed to leave once the immediate risk has reduced.

3.5 When reasonable force may be appropriate

Subject to necessity and proportionality, reasonable force may be used to:

- prevent injury to a pupil, staff member or another person;
- prevent a pupil committing an offence;
- prevent significant damage to property;
- prevent or stop serious disorder;
- safely separate pupils who are fighting;
- prevent a pupil using an object to cause harm;
- prevent a pupil leaving where doing so creates a significant risk of harm; or
- support a lawful search for a prohibited item where the relevant statutory power permits reasonable force.

This list is not exhaustive.

Force should **not** be used simply because a pupil is rude, verbally challenging, refusing an instruction or displaying ordinary low-level disruption unless one of the lawful circumstances for using force is present.

Physical intervention must never be a substitute for effective behaviour management.

The 2026 guidance confirms that reasonable force can range from guiding a pupil to safety to more significant interventions required to prevent violence, injury or other serious risks.

4. Prevention, De-escalation and Decision-Making

Staff should seek to prevent escalation wherever possible. Depending on the circumstances, staff should:

- remain calm and use respectful, non-threatening language;
- reduce verbal demands and allow processing time;
- give clear, proportionate instructions and warnings;
- offer appropriate choices;
- provide personal space;
- reduce noise, sensory stimulation or known triggers;
- move other pupils away where appropriate;
- use known Behaviour Support Plan strategies;
- use distraction, redirection and regulation strategies;
- seek assistance from pastoral, SEND or senior staff; and
- consider whether behaviour may indicate pain, distress, anxiety, sensory overload, communication difficulty or another unmet need.

Where there is an immediate risk of serious harm, staff may need to intervene without completing all de-escalation steps.

Before using force, staff should consider:

Necessity

- Is intervention necessary to prevent the relevant harm, offence, property damage or serious disorder?
- Is there a safer or less restrictive alternative?
- Is intervention likely to reduce rather than increase the risk?



Proportionality

- What is the least restrictive intervention likely to be effective?
- What is the minimum force required?
- How long is intervention necessary?
- Is the intervention proportionate to the risk?

Individual circumstances

- What are the pupil's age, size and physical development?
- Are there SEND, disability, medical, mental-health, sensory or communication needs?
- Are there known triggers, trauma or other vulnerabilities?
- Could the intervention itself cause greater harm or distress?

Staff should communicate calmly with the pupil, where practicable, explaining what is happening and why. Force must stop as soon as the immediate need for it has ended.

5. Prohibited and Unacceptable Practice

Force must never be used:

- as punishment;
- to deliberately cause pain;
- to humiliate, frighten or intimidate;
- out of anger, frustration or retaliation;
- to obtain compliance where there is no lawful justification;
- as a routine behaviour-management technique; or
- through a technique the member of staff has not been trained and authorised to use.

Staff must never:

- apply pressure to the neck;
- obstruct the mouth or nose;
- deliberately restrict the airway, breathing or circulation;
- deliberately cause pain as a method of control;
- use a technique known to create an unacceptable risk of serious injury; or
- continue an intervention once the immediate safety need has ended.

The DfE's 2026 guidance specifically warns against restraint affecting airway, breathing or circulation, including pressure to the neck or covering the mouth or nose. It also highlights the risks associated with restraint, particularly where a pupil is held on the ground.

The school will not authorise particular physical techniques unless they form part of an approved training programme. Staff may only use techniques for which they have received appropriate training and assessment.

6. SEND, Disability, Medical Conditions and Vulnerable Pupils

The school recognises that pupils with SEND, disabilities, medical conditions or other vulnerabilities may be disproportionately affected by restrictive interventions.

Behaviour may communicate:

- anxiety or distress;
- sensory overload;
- pain;
- communication difficulty;
- trauma;
- emotional dysregulation;



- an unmet need; or
- a neurodevelopmental difference.

The school will therefore seek to understand the underlying causes of behaviour and put preventative support in place.

Where appropriate, a Behaviour Support Plan and/or risk assessment will identify:

- triggers and early warning signs;
- preventative and de-escalation strategies;
- reasonable adjustments;
- relevant medical information;
- appropriate staff responses;
- any physical interventions presenting particular risks;
- pupil and parent/carers views where appropriate; and
- arrangements for review.

Plans should be developed and reviewed with the pupil, parents/carers and relevant staff or professionals. They must be reviewed following a significant incident.

A Behaviour Support Plan does **not** provide automatic permission to use force. Each incident must still be judged on its circumstances.

The SENCO will advise on reasonable adjustments and SEND-related risks and will liaise with the DSL, pastoral staff, parents/carers and relevant professionals.

The DfE 2026 guidance specifically recognises the risk of disproportionate use of restrictive interventions involving pupils with SEND and expects schools to use proactive strategies, reasonable adjustments and individual planning to reduce this risk.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body

The Governing Body will:

- ensure this policy is in place and reviewed;
- ensure procedures for recording and reporting are effective;
- monitor anonymised use-of-force data;
- consider whether interventions are being used disproportionately;
- scrutinise safeguarding, training and improvement actions; and
- review the policy annually.

The Governing Body must ensure that the school has procedures complying with section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 for recording significant use-of-force incidents and reporting them to parents as soon as practicable. [Legislation.gov.uk](https://legislation.gov.uk)

Headteacher

The Headteacher will:

- implement this policy;
- ensure staff understand their responsibilities;
- determine training requirements;
- oversee recording and reporting;
- ensure parents/carers are informed as required;
- ensure safeguarding concerns and allegations are appropriately managed;
- oversee reviews of individual plans; and
- provide governors with anonymised monitoring information.
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Designated Safeguarding Lead

The DSL will:

- advise on safeguarding implications;
- ensure allegations concerning staff are managed in accordance with KCSIE and local procedures;



- liaise with the LADO where required;
- identify safeguarding patterns or concerns; and
- ensure appropriate external referrals are made.

SENCO

The SENCO will:

- advise on reasonable adjustments;
- identify SEND-related risks;
- contribute to Behaviour Support Plans and risk assessments;
- work with pupils, parents/carers and professionals; and
- monitor possible disproportionate use involving pupils with SEND or disabilities.

Deputy Headteacher – Culture and Standards

The Deputy Headteacher will:

- support implementation of this policy;
- oversee positive-handling practice;
- coordinate training where delegated;
- monitor staff compliance; and
- support incident review and improvement planning.

All staff

All staff must:

- follow this policy;
- prioritise prevention and de-escalation;
- exercise professional judgement;
- use only the minimum force necessary;
- stop intervention when it is no longer necessary;
- seek assistance where reasonably practicable;
- record and report incidents promptly;
- attend required training; and
- report concerns about unsafe or inappropriate practice.

8. Training

The Headteacher will ensure that staff who are likely to need to use hands-on intervention receive appropriate training.

Training will address:

- prevention and positive behaviour support;
- de-escalation;
- recognising escalation;
- legal principles;
- safeguarding;
- SEND and reasonable adjustments;
- safe use of approved physical interventions;
- post-incident support;
- recording and reporting.
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St Gabriel's will use **Dynamis Training**, or another suitably appropriate provider where required.

Training will be refreshed according to identified risk, staff role, competence, incidents and changes in guidance. As a school minimum, relevant practical training will normally be refreshed at least every two years, or sooner where circumstances require.

Only techniques covered by the school's approved training may be used. Training and competency records will be maintained.



9. Recording and Reporting

9.1 Significant use of force

From 1 April 2026, section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires schools to have procedures for recording each **significant incident** involving use of force and reporting each such incident to the pupil's parent as soon as practicable, subject to the statutory safeguarding exception.

Legislation.gov.uk+1

A significant incident is normally one in which force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff. This includes physical force used to implement a non-physical restrictive intervention.

GOV.UK Assets

Staff must:

1. inform the Headteacher or designated senior leader as soon as practicable;
2. make a written record as soon as practicable and normally on the same day;
3. provide an accurate factual account;
4. record the circumstances leading to the intervention;
5. record de-escalation strategies attempted;
6. explain why intervention was necessary;
7. record the type, degree and approximate duration of force;
8. record injuries and medical treatment;
9. identify relevant SEND, medical or vulnerability information; and
10. record post-incident support and follow-up.

Records should include:

- pupil and staff names;
- relevant pupil needs/SEND status;
- date, time and location;
- events leading to the intervention;
- known or suspected triggers;
- de-escalation attempted;
- reason intervention was necessary;
- type and degree of intervention;
- duration;
- injuries/adverse effects and treatment;
- relevant pupil/witness accounts;
- parent notification; and
- follow-up actions.

These requirements reflect the minimum recording information set out in the 2026 DfE guidance.

9.2 Reporting to parents/carers

Parents/carers will be informed of a significant use-of-force incident as soon as practicable, with the school normally seeking to do so on the same day.

Information should include:

- date, time and location;
- approximate duration;
- why intervention was necessary;
- type and degree of force;
- injuries or medical treatment; and
- relevant follow-up action.

The school must not report to a parent where it appears that doing so would be likely to result in significant harm to the pupil. Where there is no parent to whom the incident can safely be reported, the statutory procedure requires reporting to the relevant local authority.



9.3 Seclusion and restraint

The school will comply with the **Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025**, which provide statutory recording and reporting requirements from 1 April 2026.

Relevant seclusion and restraint incidents will be recorded and reported to parents as soon as practicable, subject to the safeguarding exception. Where an incident is also a significant use-of-force incident, the school will use the appropriate statutory reporting procedure and avoid unnecessary duplication. Seclusion must never be used as a disciplinary punishment.

10. Safeguarding, Allegations, Complaints and Post-Incident Review

Any concern that force has been used inappropriately, excessively, unlawfully or abusively must be reported immediately to the Headteacher or DSL.

Where an allegation concerns a member of staff, the school will follow:

- KCSIE 2026;
- the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- the Allegations Against Staff procedures; and
- local LADO arrangements.

Where appropriate, the school will consider referral to the LADO and/or other agencies. Suspension will **not** be automatic; the school will consider whether it is necessary and proportionate, taking account of safeguarding risks, the nature of the allegation and available alternatives.

Complaints will be managed under the school's Complaints Policy. A complaint does not prevent the school from taking immediate safeguarding action where required.

Following an incident, the school will consider the welfare of:

- the pupil;
- other pupils involved or witnessing the incident;
- staff involved; and
- other members of the school community.

This may include:

- first aid or medical assessment;
- pastoral or SEND support;
- time and space to recover;
- staff debriefing;
- restorative work where appropriate;
- discussion with parents/carers;
- review of Behaviour Support Plans and risk assessments;
- additional staff training; and
- safeguarding referral.

The DfE expects schools to evaluate incidents promptly to understand why restrictive intervention was used, its impact, patterns and how its use might be avoided in future.

A pupil will not be punished merely because reasonable force was required to keep them or others safe. Any subsequent behaviour response must be considered separately under the Behaviour Policy, taking account of the pupil's individual circumstances.

11. Monitoring, Equality and Record Management

The Headteacher or delegated senior leader will maintain anonymised data on restrictive interventions and review it at least termly.



Monitoring will consider:

- frequency and duration;
- location and time;
- type of intervention;
- triggers and preceding events;
- injuries;
- restraint and seclusion;
- repeat incidents;
- pupils with SEND or disabilities;
- relevant protected characteristics;
- staff involved;
- training needs; and
- effectiveness of individual support plans.

Governors will receive anonymised information at least termly and will consider whether patterns indicate:

- unmet SEND needs;
- inadequate reasonable adjustments;
- ineffective behaviour strategies;
- environmental or sensory triggers;
- staff training needs;
- inconsistent practice; or
- disproportionate impact on particular groups.

The school will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and its duties concerning reasonable adjustments and equality. Identical treatment will not necessarily constitute equitable treatment.

Records relating to positive handling, reasonable force, restraint and seclusion will be stored securely and treated as confidential safeguarding/educational records. Access will be limited to those with a legitimate educational, safeguarding, management or governance need. Records will be retained in accordance with the school's records-management and data-protection requirements.

12. Review and Key Staff Reminder

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher, DSL, SENCO and Governing Body and following:

- a serious or significant incident;
- an allegation concerning physical intervention;
- a safeguarding concern;
- a material change in legislation;
- a change to KCSIE;
- a change to DfE restrictive-intervention guidance; or
- evidence of disproportionate or increasing use.

Key staff reminder

Prevent where possible.

De-escalate wherever reasonably practicable.

Use force only where lawful and necessary.

Use the least restrictive response.

Use no more force than is necessary.

Use it for the shortest time necessary.

Protect dignity and welfare.

Stop when the risk reduces.

Record and report.

Review and learn.

Key legislation and guidance

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, sections 93 and 93A.
- Education Act 1996.
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004.



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- Equality Act 2010.
- Human Rights Act 1998.
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025.
- DfE, *Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools* (April 2026).
- DfE, *Keeping Children Safe in Education* 2026.
- DfE, *Working Together to Safeguard Children* 2026.
- DfE, *Behaviour in Schools*.
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.
- Relevant local safeguarding partnership and LADO procedures.