



Serenity School

Positive Handling Policy

Responsible post holder	Headteacher
Approved by / on	01.09.2026
Next Review	01.09.2027
Publication method	Website, Staff Handbook

Definition of Restrictive Intervention and Physical Restraint

For the purposes of this policy, a restrictive intervention is a means of preventing, restricting or subduing movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. The term includes both physical and non-physical actions used to restrain a pupil. Physical restraint is a form of restrictive intervention involving direct physical contact that restricts or immobilises a pupil's movement. Restraint may also occur without direct physical contact, for example by blocking a pupil's movement or depriving them of an auxiliary aid they normally use to move. Reasonable force is the legal term for force used by school staff in the limited circumstances permitted by law. It includes physical restrictive interventions. Force is reasonable only where it is necessary and proportionate to the circumstances, and no more force is used than is necessary for the least amount of time.

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention in which a pupil is kept apart from others and prevented from leaving, including by physical obstruction, securing the place, or causing the pupil to believe that they will be punished if they leave. A significant incident involving force is any incident where the use of force goes beyond appropriate physical contact between pupils and staff. These definitions are used consistently with the Behaviour for Learning Policy.

Introduction

Serenity School is committed at all times to the highest standards in protecting and safeguarding the welfare, dignity and rights of young people entrusted to its care. This policy should be read alongside the Behaviour for Learning Policy and the Department for Education guidance "Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools", effective from 1 April 2026.

Restrictive intervention is a safeguarding and safety measure, not a disciplinary punishment. The school's normal approach is prevention, early support, positive behaviour support, communication and de-escalation. Restrictive intervention should be avoided wherever possible and used only when lawful, necessary and proportionate.

Serenity School Expectations

The use of restraint is not part of the disciplinary management process. Staff must seek to understand the circumstances contributing to a pupil's behaviour and use positive, non-threatening strategies wherever possible. In particular, staff should:

- establish and maintain positive relationships with pupils;
- use diversion, diffusion, reassurance, negotiation and appropriate communication;
- consider the pupil's communication, sensory, developmental, medical and emotional needs, known triggers, trauma-related responses and individual communication profile; and
- use the least restrictive effective response, reducing or ending any intervention as soon as it is safe to do so.

Positive Behaviour Management

All staff should adopt a positive approach to behaviour that builds self-esteem, recognises individual need and reduces the likelihood of crisis. Where restrictive intervention is foreseeable for an individual pupil, a Positive Handling Plan should identify known triggers, preventative and de-escalation strategies, communication needs, medical or SEND considerations, preferred safe responses and post-incident support. A formal individual risk assessment should be completed where an identified risk requires one. Plans must be regularly reviewed and must remain consistent with the Behaviour for Learning Policy.

A Positive Handling Plan does not provide automatic authority to use force. Staff must make a fresh assessment of the circumstances at the time of each incident and use only an intervention that is lawful, necessary, proportionate and the least restrictive option reasonably available.

General principles

Some pupils may behave in ways that create a foreseeable risk of harm or serious disorder. Staff should use what is known about the pupil and the situation to anticipate risk, recognise early warning signs and intervene positively before behaviour escalates. Restrictive intervention should be a rare occurrence and a last resort after less restrictive approaches have been considered, except where urgent action is required to prevent harm.

Use of restrictive interventions in unforeseen and emergency situations

Serenity School acknowledges that staff may encounter unforeseen or emergency situations that are not covered by an individual plan. Staff should make a dynamic risk assessment, use calm communication and de-escalation where practicable, seek assistance where this can be done safely, move other pupils away from danger and reduce environmental hazards. Staff should not intervene physically where doing so would place themselves or others at unacceptable risk, unless immediate action is necessary to prevent serious harm and the response remains reasonable and proportionate.

Use of Force or Restraint

All members of school staff have a legal power under section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances for the purposes permitted by law. The judgement about whether force is required, and the degree of force used, depends on the facts of the individual incident. Staff must continually assess whether the intervention remains necessary and whether it can safely be reduced or stopped.

Key point

To be lawful, any force used must be necessary and proportionate to the circumstances it is intended to prevent. The degree of force must be the minimum necessary to achieve the lawful purpose and must be used for the least amount of time necessary. Staff should always choose the least restrictive effective option and preserve the pupil's dignity and welfare.

Pupils with SEN, disabilities and other vulnerabilities

When deciding whether and how to intervene, staff must take account of relevant SEND, disability, medical conditions, communication needs, sensory needs, developmental understanding, known triggers, environmental factors, pain, emotional regulation, trauma-related responses and the pupil's individual communication profile. The school will comply with its duties under the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments, and will consider how an intervention may affect a pupil's welfare and dignity.

Common Law powers

The statutory power under section 93 is additional to the common law rights available to any person in an emergency, including the use of reasonable force in self-defence or to protect another person from injury. Any action must still be reasonable in the circumstances. Staff should act within their training where practicable, but an emergency may require immediate action to prevent serious harm.

Reducing the likelihood of situations arising where force may need to be used

Preventative and early intervention should be the norm. The school will seek to reduce the need for restrictive intervention by maintaining a calm and predictable environment, developing positive relationships, using individualised support and communication strategies, recognising triggers and early signs of distress, making reasonable adjustments, and ensuring staff are trained in positive behaviour support and de-escalation. Staff should seek assistance and remove or reduce environmental risks where this can be done safely.

Deciding if the use of force is appropriate

The decision whether to use force must be based on the circumstances at the time. Staff should consider the seriousness and immediacy of the risk, the likelihood and severity of harm, the pupil's individual needs and vulnerabilities, the likely impact of intervention on the pupil's welfare and dignity, whether another less restrictive strategy is likely to be effective, and the risks associated with intervening compared with not intervening. The fact that an intervention is included in a Positive Handling Plan does not remove the need for this assessment.

Before using force

Where circumstances allow, staff should use calm, clear and developmentally appropriate verbal and/or non-verbal communication, explain what they need the pupil to do, allow processing time and offer choices, space, reassurance, distraction or other known de-escalation strategies. Staff should tell the pupil what they are doing and why where it is safe and appropriate to do so. During any intervention, staff must monitor the pupil continuously and reduce or cease the restriction as soon as the risk allows.

Schools can use reasonable force to:

Reasonable force may be used only for a purpose permitted by law, including to prevent a pupil from:

- committing a criminal offence;
- causing injury to themselves or another person;
- damaging property; or
- causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

The headteacher or an authorised member of staff may also use reasonable force when conducting a lawful search for an item for which legislation permits force to be used. Force must not be used to search solely for an item banned only by school rules.

Schools cannot:

- use force as a punishment;
- use more force, or restriction, than is necessary or continue it for longer than necessary;
- use pain to secure compliance; or
- use restraint in a way that compromises a pupil's airway, breathing or circulation.

Working positively

Throughout an incident staff should seek to prevent escalation and maintain the pupil's dignity. Staff should remain calm, use clear and simple communication, allow appropriate personal space, offer reassurance, use the pupil's known communication and regulation strategies, seek help where appropriate and continually look for opportunities to reduce the restriction. The intervention should end as soon as it is safe to do so; it must not be continued simply because a pupil has not become fully calm or compliant.

What not to do

Methods or techniques intended to cause pain are prohibited. Staff must not deliberately interfere with a pupil's airway, breathing or circulation, including by covering the mouth or nose or applying unsafe pressure to the neck, chest or abdomen. Techniques such as forcing an arm up a pupil's back, pulling hair, striking a pupil or deliberately causing injury are prohibited. Ground restraint is not a preferred strategy because of the additional risks it creates. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should seek to release or reposition the pupil to a safer, less restrictive position as quickly as possible.

Safe Techniques

Serenity School uses PRICE training as its practical framework for prevention, de-escalation and safe physical intervention. Training does not itself determine whether an intervention is lawful. Staff must apply their professional judgement, this policy, the Behaviour for Learning Policy and current DfE guidance in every incident. Where the situation is not urgent, assistance should be sought from appropriately trained staff. All staff remain responsible for acting within the law, safeguarding pupils, preserving dignity and reporting concerns.

Seclusion

Seclusion may only be used as a non-disciplinary safety measure where it is necessary to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing a high level of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. It must never be used as punishment or for staff convenience, must be supervised appropriately, and must end as soon as the immediate safety need has reduced. Every incident of seclusion must be recorded and reported in accordance with this policy.

Post-incident support

Following any restrictive intervention, the immediate priority is the welfare of the pupil, staff and others affected. Appropriate physical and emotional welfare checks should be completed. First aid or medical assessment/treatment should be provided without delay where required, including where there is injury, breathing difficulty, loss of consciousness, significant distress or another adverse effect. Any safeguarding concern arising from the incident should be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

Pupils and staff should be given appropriate time to regain composure before reflective discussion. The pupil should be offered a developmentally appropriate opportunity to communicate their experience and views. Debriefing should consider what happened, triggers, whether de-escalation was effective, the impact of the

intervention and what could reduce the likelihood of recurrence. Reintegration, relationship repair and ongoing wellbeing support should be provided where appropriate. Positive Handling Plans, risk assessments, reasonable adjustments and support strategies must be reviewed where learning from the incident indicates that changes are required.

Reporting and recording use of restrictive interventions

The proprietor must ensure that procedures are in place and followed for recording and reporting restrictive interventions. Each significant incident involving the use of force must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable, with staff endeavouring to complete the record no later than the same day. Every incident of seclusion or restraint, including restraint without direct physical contact, must also be recorded in writing as soon as practicable, with staff endeavouring to do so no later than the same day.

The written record must include, as a minimum:

- the names of the pupil and staff directly involved;
- the time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention;
- relevant pupil needs or circumstances, including identified SEND/SEN status where applicable;
- what led to the incident, including known or potential triggers and preventative/de-escalation strategies used;
- why the intervention was considered necessary;
- where relevant, the type and degree of force used;
- details of any physical injuries sustained; and
- post-incident support, including medical treatment or support for other adverse impacts.

The school's Case Note / Incident Pro Forma and Positive Handling Pro Forma should be completed as required and submitted to the Headteacher/SLT. Records must be sufficiently clear to demonstrate the decision-making, intervention, outcome and follow-up action.

Notification to parents/carers

For each significant use of force, and for every incident of seclusion or restraint, the school will provide the required information to the pupil's parent/carer in writing as soon as practicable and will endeavour to do so no later than the same day. The information will include the time, date, location and approximate duration, why the intervention was necessary, the type and degree of force where relevant, and any injuries sustained. This requirement applies even where the intervention was anticipated or agreed within a Positive Handling Plan or behaviour support plan.

Telephone or face-to-face contact may supplement written notification but does not replace it. The statutory reporting exceptions will be applied where the pupil is aged 20 or over, or where reporting to a parent is assessed as likely to result in serious harm to the pupil. Where the exception applies, the school will follow the alternative reporting route required by the current guidance, including reporting to another parent where this can be done without significant harm, or otherwise to the local authority where the pupil is ordinarily resident. For these purposes, parent includes carers and persons with parental responsibility and, where applicable, a local authority providing accommodation under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

Monitoring of incidents

The Headteacher and senior leaders will monitor restrictive intervention records for frequency, patterns, triggers, injuries, duration, pupil groups, repeated use and the effectiveness of preventative strategies. The proprietor will take all reasonable steps to ensure that recording and reporting procedures are complied with and will review relevant data to identify trends, training needs, safeguarding concerns and opportunities to reduce restrictive practice. Individual plans and risk assessments will be reviewed after significant incidents and at planned review points.

Complaints

The use of restrictive intervention can lead to concerns or allegations. Complaints will be considered under the school's complaints procedure. Any allegation that a member of staff used force or another restrictive intervention inappropriately will be managed in accordance with the school's safeguarding and staff allegation procedures. Records, pupil views, staff accounts and other available evidence will be considered as appropriate.

Appendix 1 - Serenity School Positive Handling Plan

This plan must be read with the Behaviour for Learning Policy and this Positive Handling Policy. It identifies foreseeable support strategies but does not authorise restrictive intervention automatically; necessity, proportionality and least-restrictive practice must be assessed at the time.

Name of Pupil:		Year/ Tutor Group:	
Staff completing form:		Date:	

Trigger Behaviours: *(Describe common behaviours / situations which are known to have led to Positive Handling being required. When is such behaviour likely to occur?)*

Topography of behaviour: *(Describe what the behaviour looks / sounds like?)*

PREFERRED Supportive & Intervention Strategies: *(Other ways of C.A.L.M.ing such behaviours Describe strategies that, where and when possible, should be attempted before positive handling techniques are used)*

Verbal advice and support;	ignoring
reassurance	Distraction; take-up time
C.A.L.M. talking / stance;	Time out (requires a written plan); withdrawal (requires staff
negotiation	observation); cool-off (directed/offered); contingent touch
Choices / limits; humour;	Transfer adult (Help Protocol)
consequences; planned	Success reminder
Others	

Praise Points / Strengths: *(Areas that can be developed and built upon. State 3 Bridge Builders)*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Medical Conditions that should be taken into account before physically intervening: *(i.e. brittle bones, asthma, etc)*

Possible Diversion Strategies: *(i.e. any hobbies / interests / words / objects that may divert attention away from an escalating crisis)*

Preferred Handling Strategies: Describe any agreed safe, trained and least-restrictive handling strategies, including staffing requirements and exit/release strategies. Ground restraint is not a preferred strategy; if a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release or reposition to a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.

Re-integration to Class: *(Describe steps to be taken for child to re-enter the classroom and learning environment)*

De-briefing process following incident: *(What is the care to be provided?)*

Recording and notifications required (including same-day written parent/carers information where required):

Incident Form
Social Worker

Parents/Carers
EP

LA
CFCS

Others:

Completed by: Name Signature
Date Review Date

Appendix 2 - Serenity School Case Note / Incident Pro Forma

Name of Pupil:	Year:	Date:	
Staff completing form:		Time:	
Staff involved:		Location:	

Details / Comments

*Remember **S O A P** – What was **S**aid? What was **O**bserved? What **A**ction was taken? What **P**lanning is required?*

Antecedents:																		
Behaviours displayed:																		
Staff Intervention & Response:																		
De-escalation techniques used: <table><tr><td>Verbal Advice & Support</td><td>☐ Re-assurance</td><td>☐ Calm Talking</td><td>☐ Humour</td><td>☐ Distraction</td><td>☐</td></tr><tr><td>Short Term Time Out</td><td>☐ Options offered</td><td>☐ Negotiation</td><td>☐ Warning</td><td>☐ Third Party</td><td>☐</td></tr><tr><td>Making the Environment Safer</td><td>☐ Withdrawal offered/directed</td><td>☐ Listening</td><td>☐ Other (specify below)</td><td>☐</td><td></td></tr></table> 	Verbal Advice & Support	☐ Re-assurance	☐ Calm Talking	☐ Humour	☐ Distraction	☐	Short Term Time Out	☐ Options offered	☐ Negotiation	☐ Warning	☐ Third Party	☐	Making the Environment Safer	☐ Withdrawal offered/directed	☐ Listening	☐ Other (specify below)	☐	
Verbal Advice & Support	☐ Re-assurance	☐ Calm Talking	☐ Humour	☐ Distraction	☐													
Short Term Time Out	☐ Options offered	☐ Negotiation	☐ Warning	☐ Third Party	☐													
Making the Environment Safer	☐ Withdrawal offered/directed	☐ Listening	☐ Other (specify below)	☐														
Was Positive Handling used: Yes ☐ (please attach Positive Handling form) No ☐																		
Consequence:																		
<table><tr><td>Matter resolved - NFA</td><td>☐ Loss of points</td><td>☐ Meeting with Parents/Carer</td><td>☐ Inclusion</td><td>☐</td></tr><tr><td>Phone call/letter home</td><td>☐ Pay for damage</td><td>☐ Catch Up</td><td>☐ Refer to SLT</td><td>☐</td></tr></table> Other:	Matter resolved - NFA	☐ Loss of points	☐ Meeting with Parents/Carer	☐ Inclusion	☐	Phone call/letter home	☐ Pay for damage	☐ Catch Up	☐ Refer to SLT	☐								
Matter resolved - NFA	☐ Loss of points	☐ Meeting with Parents/Carer	☐ Inclusion	☐														
Phone call/letter home	☐ Pay for damage	☐ Catch Up	☐ Refer to SLT	☐														

Appendix 3 - Serenity School Positive Handling Pro Forma

Name of Pupil:	Year:	Date:	
Staff completing form:		Time:	
Staff involved:		Location:	

Details / Comments

*Remember **S O A P** – What was **S**aid? What was **O**bserved? What **A**ction was taken? What **P**lanning is required?*

Antecedents:

Case note / Incident Pro Forma attached? Yes ☐ No ☐

Positive Handling:

Outcome:

Appendix 4- Serenity School Risk Assessment Pro Forma

Assessing and Managing Risks for Children Who Present Challenging Behaviours

Introduction

It is important that all schools through planning, anticipate risks and have plans in place to cope with any occurrences.

The risk assessment document below should be completed where there is an identified foreseeable risk, including an increased likelihood that reasonable force or another restrictive intervention may be required. It should consider risks to the pupil, other pupils, staff, other adults and property, and identify prevention, de-escalation and risk-reduction measures.

What is meant by "risk" and "risk assessment"?

The term "risk" refers to any circumstances which could lead to adverse outcomes for the pupil or others. Risks may arise in relation to a number of factors, such as the health care and social support arrangements for the pupil; interactions between the pupil and his or her environment; the direct impact of behaviour(s) presented by the pupil; measures and interventions employed to reduce, limit or manage the risks presented to the pupil and others.

Risk assessment and management is a process that helps staff and others to consider risk issues, to act reasonably, and to learn from what happens in everyday practice. In the main, risk assessment and management involves:

‘Using what is known, in the light of experience, to make rational judgements about risk issues, weigh up options and take reasonable action to implement a range of approaches to support and safeguard young people’.

By working in this way, it is possible to make decisions and take actions to:

- **Limit the level of inherent risk** to which pupils and others are exposed
- **Avoid unreasonable risks** for the pupil and others
- Ensure that strategies used to respond to challenging behaviour are **reasonable**, and **proportionate** to the risks presented by the behaviour

Using a structured approach to risk assessment and management will help staff to make decisions about what can reasonably be done to limit risks. At the same time, it will help prepare them for times when things go wrong.

Challenging behaviours are often foreseeable, even though it may be difficult to predict exactly when they will occur or the degree of challenge they will pose. As a general rule, the schools will explore why individual pupils behave in ways that pose a risk, try to understand the factors that influence the behaviour, recognise the early warning signs that indicate that the pupil’s behaviour is beginning to emerge, and develop the skills to manage difficult situations competently and sensitively.

Students Who Present Challenging Behaviours - Risk Assessment Form

Name:

Tutor group:

Date:

Identification of Risk	
Describe the foreseeable risk	
Is the risk potential or actual?	
List who is affected by the risk.	
Assessment of Risk	
In which situations does the risk usually occur?	
How likely it is that the risk will arise?	
If the risk arises, who is likely to be injured or hurt?	
What kinds of injuries or harm are likely to occur?	
How serious are the adverse outcomes?	

Risk Reduction Options			
Measures	Possible options	Benefits	Drawbacks
Proactive interventions to prevent risk			
Early interventions to manage risk			
Reactive interventions to respond to adverse outcomes			
Agreed Behaviour Management Plan & School Risk Management Strategy			
Focus of measures	Measures to be employed	Level of risk	
Proactive interventions to prevent risks			
Early interventions to manage risks			
Reactive interventions to respond to adverse outcomes			

Completed by: *Name* *Signature*

Date *Review Date*