



St Benedict

CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

**RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS
and
USE of REASONABLE FORCE POLICY**

including searching, screening and confiscation

Effective Date: 1st April 2026

Review Date: June 2027

1. Rationale

To set clear guidelines and boundaries for the use of restrictive interventions and reasonable force, facilitating a safe and protected environment in St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust (SBCAT) Schools where students Achieve, Belong, and Thrive. This policy adheres to the DfE statutory guidance effective from 1st April 2026.

2. Aims

1. To identify circumstances requiring restrictive intervention
2. To prioritise de-escalation and prevention.
3. To set out mandatory statutory procedures for recording and reporting incidents.

3. Preamble and Legal Framework

From 1st April 2026, this policy is governed by the *Schools Regulations 2025*. All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force (Section 93, Education and Inspections Act 2006) to prevent pupils from committing an offence, injuring themselves or others, or damaging property.

Key Definitions from April 2026:

- **Restrictive Intervention:** Use of force to restrict a pupil's movement or liberty.
- **Restraint:** Physically holding or bringing a student under control to prevent harm.
- **Seclusion:** Supervised confinement where a pupil is prevented from leaving.

Note: Seclusion must only be used as a safety measure for dysregulated pupils and never as a punishment.

4. Circumstances for Use of Force

Reasonable force may be used in the following situations:

- a) To remove a disruptive student from the classroom where they refuse to follow instructions and pose a risk to the safety/learning of others.
- b) To prevent behaviour that disrupts school events, trips, or visits.
- c) To prevent a student from leaving a room where doing so would risk their safety.
- d) To stop a student attacking staff/peers or to break up a fight.
- e) To restrain a student at risk of self-harm.

Note: Force can never be used as a punishment. The "Expected Standard" for intervention is that it must be: Necessary, Proportionate, and for Pupil Welfare.

5. Mandatory Recording and Reporting (Statutory Duty)

From 1st April 2026, it is a legal requirement to record and report all significant incidents of restrictive intervention.

All incidents must be recorded on CPOMS/My Concern and also on a **Restrictive Intervention Report** **no later than the end of the school day** on which the incident occurred.

The report must include:

- Names of students/staff involved (including SEN status and any identified needs).
- The Necessity Test: Why force was required and why de-escalation failed.
- De-escalation details: Specific strategies used *before* physical intervention.
- Details of the technique used, duration, and degree of force.
- Injury Audit: Any injuries sustained by students or staff.
- Post-Incident Support: Details of medical checks or "wellbeing debriefs" provided to the student and staff.

Informing Parents/Carers: Schools have a statutory duty to inform parents/carers of any significant incident. A member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) must call parents as soon as practicable and follow up in writing the same day, providing details of the intervention and the reason it was necessary.

DSLs and Headteachers must be informed of any incidents immediately by school staff and will advise SLT before making any calls to parents/carers and must check any reports before they are shared with parents.

DSLs and Headteachers can also seek advice from the SBCAT Safeguarding lead.

SEE APPENDICES A and B for guidance on reporting, including a report template.

6. Acceptable and Unacceptable Actions

Acceptable Forms of Restraint:

1. Safe holding tactics designed to limit movement without causing injury.
2. Physical contact to guide a student to safety.
3. Removal of a student from one location to another for safety reasons.
4. Use of reasonable force to remove a weapon/dangerous objects

Unacceptable/Prohibited Actions:

- Techniques that obstruct breathing: Any pressure to the neck, chest, or abdomen.
- Seated Double Embrace: Forcing a student into a sitting position and leaning them forward.
- Double Basket-hold: Holding arms across the chest.
- Nose Distraction: Any sharp upward jabs.
- Ground Restraint: Staff must avoid holding students on the ground. If a student falls, they must be repositioned or released immediately.
- Corporal Punishment: Hitting, kicking, slapping, or shaking is strictly illegal.

7. Identifying Risk

Risk assessments must be carried out in SBCAT schools by the DSL and/or Headteacher for any pupil whose behaviour makes restrictive intervention likely.

- If a pupil is displaying a pattern of behaviour that means you need to use reasonable force repeatedly to keep them and others safe, a safety and restrictive intervention plan must be

written, agreed and implemented to manage this situation. This plan must include a simple log (date, time, member of staff, intervention used etc) which is updated to record incidents where agreed strategies are used each day instead of completing a use of restrictive interventions template.

However, if restrictive interventions are used which are not part of a pupil's agreed risk assessment and intervention plan then a full restrictive interventions report must be completed using the template

- The DSL should work with parents/carers to create a behaviour and safety plan which sets out the types of physical interventions that will be used in extreme circumstances.
- Reasonable force can be used on pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and where a student has SEND the SENCO should also be involved in identifying students at risk and in creating risk assessments and safety plans with DSLs and parents/carers.

8. The Use of Seclusion

Definition: Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention involving the supervised confinement and isolation of a pupil, away from others, in an area from which the pupil is prevented from leaving.

A pupil is considered "prevented from leaving" if:

- The door is locked or held shut.
- The exit is physically blocked by a member of staff.
- The pupil believes they are not allowed to leave or will be punished if they try to do so.

Core Principles for Use of Seclusion

- Safety Only: Seclusion must only be used as a safety measure to protect the pupil or others from significant harm during periods of extreme emotional or behavioural dysregulation.
- Non-Disciplinary: It must never be used as a punishment, a disciplinary sanction (e.g., for "answering back"), or a way to enforce compliance with school rules.
- Continuous Supervision: Any pupil in seclusion must be continuously supervised by a staff member who can see and hear them at all times.
- Duration: Seclusion must end the moment the immediate risk of harm has passed.

Seclusion vs. Other Practices

It is vital to distinguish Seclusion from other forms of separation used in SBCAT Schools:

- Time-Out / Chill-Out: A voluntary or suggested break where a pupil goes to a quiet area or sensory room but is free to leave if they choose.
- Removal: Moving a pupil from the classroom to a supervised area (like an inclusion unit/internal alternative provision base to complete work. This is a disciplinary sanction and is only "seclusion" if the pupil is physically prevented from leaving the area.
- Sensory Breaks: A planned, therapeutic intervention in a sensory room to help a pupil regulate, where they are supported and not confined.

Statutory Recording Requirement for Seclusion

From 1 April 2026, every instance where a child is secluded—regardless of the name used for the room

(e.g., "The Hub," "Reflection Room") must be logged as a restrictive intervention. The report must state:

1. The Trigger: What caused the dysregulation?
2. The Necessity: Why was seclusion the only way to maintain safety?
3. The Duration: Exactly how long was the pupil prevented from leaving?
4. The Outcome: How was the pupil supported to reintegrate after the risk passed?

9. Searching, Screening, and Confiscation in line with July 2022 DfE Guidance

Searching with Consent: Staff may search students for any item with their agreement. If a student refuses, appropriate disciplinary sanctions apply as per the school's Behaviour Policy.

Searching Without Consent (Prohibited Items): The Headteacher and authorised staff may search without consent for:

- Knives/weapons, Alcohol, Illegal Drugs, Stolen Items.
- Tobacco/Vapes, Fireworks, Pornographic images.
- Items likely to be used to commit an offence or cause injury.

Procedure for Searches:

- Must be conducted by a staff member of the same sex as the student.
- A witness (ideally of the same sex) must be present.
- **Exception:** If there is a risk of serious harm, a search may be conducted immediately without a witness or same-sex officer (must be reported to the Headteacher immediately after).

Electronic Devices: Staff may examine data/files on a device if there is a "good reason" (i.e., suspicion that the device is being used to cause harm or disrupt teaching). Files may be deleted if they undermine the safe environment of the school.

10. Police Liaison and Searches

When a school believes a student is in possession of an illegal item (such as drugs or a weapon), they may involve the police. Once the police are on the premises, the procedure shifts from the school's statutory powers to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE).

The following details the strict procedures that must be followed during a police-led search of a student.

The Deciding Factor: Necessity and Safeguarding

Before the police are even called for a search, school leaders (typically the Headteacher or DSL) must perform a risk assessment.

- **Safeguarding First:** Staff must balance the risk of the suspected item against the potential trauma of a police search on the student's mental health.
- **Exhausting Alternatives:** Schools should ensure that less invasive approaches such as asking the student to voluntarily turn out their pockets or a staff-led search of outer clothing have been exhausted first.

Police Powers of Entry and Search

- **Weapons:** Under Section 139B of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, the police have the power to enter school premises and search anyone they "reasonably believe" is carrying a weapon.
- **Other Illegal Items:** For drugs or stolen goods, police usually enter by invitation of the headteacher or with a warrant. Once lawfully on the property, they can use PACE Code A powers to conduct a search if they have reasonable grounds for suspicion.

Levels of Intrusiveness (PACE Code A)

Police searches are categorized by how much clothing is removed:

1. JOG (Jacket, Outer coat, and Gloves): Can be removed in public view.
2. MTS (More Thorough Search): Removal of more than JOG but not exposing intimate parts (e.g., shoes, socks, or a t-shirt over a vest). This must be done out of public view by an officer of the same sex.
3. EIP (Exposure of Intimate Parts / "Strip Search"): A highly intrusive search that requires a higher threshold of "necessity" and specific oversight.

Mandatory Procedures for Strip Searches (EIP)

If the police decide a strip search is required on school premises, the following statutory safeguards are non-negotiable:

- **Supervisor Consultation:** The searching officer must consult with a police supervisor before the search begins.
- **Same-Sex Requirement:** The search must be conducted by an officer of the same sex as the student and in the presence of a same-sex witness.
- **Privacy:** The search must be conducted in a private room (e.g., a locked office) where the student cannot be seen by anyone not required for the search.

In SBCAT Schools the Headteacher or DSL must contact the SBCAT CEO or SBCAT Safeguarding lead to inform them as soon as possible that the police are consulting with a police supervisor with a view to carrying out an EIP search.

The Role of the "Appropriate Adult" (AA)

For any student under 18, a police strip search **cannot** take place without an Appropriate Adult present.

- Who can be an AA? Usually, a parent or guardian. If they are unavailable, a DSL, social worker, or senior school leader may act as the AA.
- Duties of the AA: * Advocate: They must safeguard the child's rights and welfare.
 - Challenge: They should ask the police if the search is truly "necessary and proportionate".

- Support: They help the child understand what is happening and ensure they are treated fairly.
- Exception: A search can only proceed without an AA if there is a "risk of serious harm" that is immediate (e.g., the student is believed to be about to use a weapon).

School's Duty of Care

Even though the police are in charge of the search, the school retains a duty of care to the student:

- **Parental Notification**: Schools should attempt to contact parents before a police search occurs, especially if a strip search is proposed.
- **Aftercare**: Regardless of whether an illegal item is found, the school must provide immediate emotional support to the student and follow up with a safeguarding review.
- **Recording**: The school must create its own detailed record on **CPOMS/My Concern** of why the police were called, what the police did, and the support provided afterward.

Signed:

Date:

Name:

Chair of St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust Board

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