IWYS
Alternative Provision

Reasonable Force and Restrictive Interventions Policy

Policy owner	Head of Provision / Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
Approved by	[Insert proprietor / governing body / responsible person]
Date approved	[Insert date]
Review date	[Insert date — at least annually and after any serious incident or legal change]
Applies to	All staff and other adults working under IWYS direction, including at off-site activities

1. Purpose and principles

IWYS Alternative Provision is committed to keeping learners, staff and others safe while protecting each learner's dignity, rights and welfare. This policy explains how staff should prevent escalation, respond to immediate risks, and manage any use of physical intervention or other restrictive practice.

- Prevention, de-escalation, positive relationships and individualised support are the first priorities.
- Physical intervention is a last resort, used only where lawful, necessary and proportionate to the immediate risk and only for the shortest time required.
- Force must never be used to punish, humiliate, intimidate, retaliate, secure routine compliance or compensate for inadequate staffing.
- The least restrictive safe response should be chosen, with the learner's age, size, communication, disability, trauma history, health and known triggers taken into account.
- Every incident must be followed by welfare checks, recording, review and appropriate communication in line with the law and this policy.

2. Scope and legal framework

This policy applies during learning, transitions, breaks, trips, transport or other activities for which IWYS has responsibility, subject to the legal authority of the adults involved and the circumstances. It must be read with the Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, Health and Safety arrangements, individual risk assessments and any relevant placement or commissioning agreement.

For schools in England, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the Department for Education's guidance 'Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools' (effective from 1 April 2026) are relevant. The statutory recording/reporting duties and precise legal powers depend on the setting and circumstances. If IWYS is not a school within the scope of those provisions, the school-specific statutory powers and duties may not apply in the same way. Staff must act only within powers available to them under applicable law, safeguarding duties and their role.

This policy is a template, not legal advice. IWYS should verify the current legislation and guidance, its registration status, any contractual obligations imposed by commissioning schools/local authorities, and the requirements for its particular learners before approval.

3. Definitions

Reasonable force: Physical force that is lawful and objectively reasonable in the circumstances, and no more than necessary to achieve a legitimate safety purpose.

Physical intervention: Physical contact or action intended to guide, block, separate, prevent movement or otherwise manage immediate risk.

Restrictive intervention: An intervention that restricts a person's movement, liberty or freedom to act. This may include physical restraint and other forms of restriction.

Seclusion: The involuntary confinement of a learner alone in a room or area from which they are prevented from leaving. It is a serious restrictive practice and must not be used unless specifically lawful and permitted under the applicable statutory framework and approved procedures.

De-escalation: Actions that reduce distress and risk, such as calm communication, offering space, reducing demands, removing an audience and providing safe choices.

4. When intervention may be considered

Where the relevant legal authority exists, a proportionate physical intervention may be considered only when necessary to prevent an immediate or imminent risk such as:

- physical injury to the learner or another person;
- a serious and immediate risk of harm, including a learner running into traffic or another dangerous area;
- a criminal act or serious damage to property where intervention is lawful and necessary;
- a dangerous fight or assault that cannot safely be managed by less restrictive means.

Staff should not use force merely because a learner refuses an instruction, swears, is disruptive, leaves a task, damages property where there is no immediate safety need, or is perceived as disrespectful. These situations should normally be managed through communication, the behaviour plan, support and proportionate non-physical responses.

5. When force must not be used

- As punishment, retaliation, humiliation, intimidation or to cause pain.
- To enforce compliance, make a learner apologise, complete work or follow an instruction where there is no immediate safety justification.
- As a planned response to behaviour unless the plan is lawful, risk-assessed, authorised and consistent with applicable guidance.
- By staff who lack the relevant legal authority or who are not competent to carry out the proposed intervention, except where a separate lawful emergency justification applies.
- In a way that deliberately compromises breathing, places pressure on the neck, chest or abdomen, or creates avoidable risk of injury.
- Through dangerous holds, pain-compliance techniques, prone restraint or other high-risk techniques except where a specific lawful framework, appropriate training and approved protocol expressly permits the intervention; any such practice must be subject to stringent safeguards.
- By locking a learner in a room, blocking exit as seclusion, or using isolation as a punishment unless a lawful, specifically authorised framework applies.

6. Prevention and de-escalation

Staff should know each learner's needs and follow any individual behaviour support plan, risk assessment, communication plan or healthcare advice. Preventative practice should include:

- building trusting, respectful relationships and using predictable routines;
- identifying early warning signs, triggers, unmet needs and environmental stressors;
- using calm tone, non-threatening body language, clear brief language and appropriate processing time;
- offering safe choices, space, time, a quiet area that the learner can leave, or support from a trusted adult;
- reducing the audience and removing nearby hazards or other learners where safe;
- seeking assistance early, agreeing staff roles and keeping an exit route available;
- considering disability, neurodivergence, communication needs, pain, medication effects, trauma and cultural factors.

7. Decision-making during an incident

1. Assess the immediate risk to the learner and others, including whether there is time to use a less restrictive option.
2. Use verbal de-escalation and other safe alternatives wherever possible.
3. If physical intervention is lawfully justified, use the least restrictive response that is reasonably necessary and keep it as brief as possible.
4. Call for assistance and emergency services where the risk warrants it. Do not put staff or learners at unreasonable risk by attempting an unsafe intervention.
5. Continue to communicate calmly, explain what is happening where practicable, monitor the learner's wellbeing and release as soon as the immediate risk has passed.
6. Stop immediately if the intervention is no longer necessary, causes unexpected distress or injury, or creates a medical risk; seek urgent medical assistance where needed.
7. Do not improvise unfamiliar techniques. Staff must follow their training and approved procedures.

8. SEND, disability, trauma and individual plans

Before an incident, IWYS should identify foreseeable risks and consider whether a learner's special educational needs, disability, communication profile, trauma history, health condition or past experiences affect the likelihood or impact of restrictive intervention. Where appropriate, agree an individual support and risk-management plan with the learner, parent/carer, placing organisation and relevant professionals.

Plans must prioritise prevention, describe triggers and early signs, list effective de-escalation strategies, specify who to contact and identify any health considerations. Any planned restrictive intervention must be legally permissible, properly authorised, based on a current risk assessment, and carried out only by suitably trained staff. A plan does not itself create a legal power to use force.

9. Staff training and competence

IWYS will identify the training needs of staff according to learner profiles, the likelihood of incidents and the responsibilities of each role. Staff must know this policy, safeguarding escalation routes and their own limits. Physical intervention training should be delivered by a suitably qualified provider, refreshed as required, and matched to the techniques staff may be expected to use.

Training does not itself establish legal authority to use force. Staff must not use techniques for which they are not trained, and managers must ensure that staffing levels, supervision and deployment arrangements reduce the likelihood of unsafe intervention.

10. Immediate action after an incident

- Release and provide reassurance as soon as safe; check the learner and everyone involved for injury, distress or medical concerns.
- Arrange first aid or urgent medical assistance where needed. Treat breathing difficulties, loss of consciousness, significant injury or acute distress as urgent.
- Inform the senior lead and DSL promptly, particularly where injury, safeguarding concerns, allegations or a pattern of incidents is involved.
- Ensure the learner is supported to recover and, when appropriate, offer a calm, non-punitive debrief once they are ready.
- Offer staff and witnesses support and allow them to record their own factual accounts.
- Preserve relevant evidence in line with safeguarding, privacy and records procedures. Do not pressure learners or staff to agree a shared account.

11. Recording, reporting and informing parents/carers

Every physical intervention or restrictive practice must be documented promptly in IWYS's incident record, even where a statutory threshold for a particular formal record may differ. Where school-specific statutory duties apply, IWYS must also comply with the requirements in force, including those concerning significant use-of-force incidents and seclusion.

The record should include:

- learner's name, date, time, location and adults/witnesses involved;
- the behaviour and observable facts immediately before the intervention, including risks identified;
- de-escalation and less restrictive options attempted, and why they were insufficient or impracticable;
- the legal/safety rationale, type and duration of intervention, and who made decisions;
- the learner's response, any injury, distress, first aid or medical attention, and welfare checks;
- when and how the intervention ended, and the immediate outcome;
- who was informed, when parents/carers or placing organisations were contacted, and any reason for delay;
- follow-up actions, review findings, changes to risk/support plans and lessons learned.

Parents/carers and the placing organisation should be informed as soon as practicable, subject to safeguarding advice, the learner's age and circumstances, and any lawful reason to delay or limit disclosure. Record the decision and rationale. If an allegation is made against a member of staff, follow the allegations/low-level concerns procedure and seek advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where applicable.

12. Review, learning and oversight

The Head of Provision and DSL (or delegated senior lead) will review each incident to assess necessity, proportionality, compliance with policy, injuries, learner welfare, staff support and whether the plan or environment should change. Repeated incidents must trigger a wider review of triggers, staffing, curriculum demands, communication needs and whether specialist advice is required.

IWYS leadership will review incident patterns at least termly, including frequency, duration, context, outcomes and any disproportionality affecting groups of learners. Records will be handled securely and access restricted to those who need them. Findings should inform staff training, prevention strategies and policy review.

13. Complaints, allegations and safeguarding

Learners, parents/carers and staff may raise concerns about an intervention through the complaints procedure or directly with the DSL/Head of Provision. Concerns must be taken seriously, recorded and investigated fairly. Where a child may be at risk or an allegation against an adult is made, safeguarding procedures take priority and external referral must be considered in accordance with local arrangements.

No learner or staff member should be discouraged from making a good-faith report. Confidentiality will be respected as far as possible, but information may need to be shared to safeguard a child or comply with the law.

14. Related documents and guidance

- IWYS Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour and Positive Support Policy
- Health and Safety and Accident Reporting procedures
- Individual behaviour support plans and risk assessments
- Staff Code of Conduct, Complaints and Whistleblowing procedures
- Department for Education: Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (effective 1 April 2026)
- Education and Inspections Act 2006, including sections 93 and 93A where applicable
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and relevant local safeguarding partnership procedures

Appendix A — Incident record checklist

Field	Record details
Learner / date / time / location	[Complete]
Staff and witnesses	[Complete]
Antecedents and immediate risk	[Factual description]
De-escalation / alternatives tried	[Complete]
Reason and authority for intervention	[Complete]
Intervention type and duration	[Complete]
Learner response / injuries / medical care	[Complete]
Parent/carer / placing organisation informed	[Who, when, method; reasons for any delay]
DSL / senior lead informed	[Who and when]
Debrief, review and follow-up actions	[Owner and due date]
Record completed by / date	[Complete]

Appendix B — Approval record

Approved by: _____ Role: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Next review due: _____

Legal status / scope confirmed by: _____ Date: _____