

'They will soar on wings like eagles ...'

Isaiah 40:31

collaborate | enrich | trust | innovate | aspire | nurture



Multi Academy Trust Policy

Common Trust Policy, Use as Published

Restrictive Interventions Policy

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Restrictive Interventions Policy (Including Reasonable Force, Restraint and Seclusion)

1. Policy Statement and Aquila Values

Aquila schools are committed to providing safe, inclusive and nurturing learning environments where all pupils can thrive.

This policy is rooted in the Aquila values of:

- Nurture – prioritising pupils’ physical and emotional wellbeing
- Trust– upholding dignity, rights and individuality, acting lawfully, transparently and accountably
- Aspiration – learning from practice to continually reduce the need for restrictive interventions.

Restrictive interventions are sometimes necessary to protect pupils or others from harm, but they carry risks. This policy sets out clear expectations to ensure such interventions are lawful, proportionate, preventative and used only as a last resort, with a strong focus on learning from incidents and reducing them over time.

2. Scope and Definitions (April 2026 Guidance)

The Department for Education now uses the term restrictive interventions to describe a broader range of practices that restrict a pupil’s movement, liberty or access to others. All school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force to prevent injury, damage to property or serious disorder. The force used must be proportionate i.e. the minimum necessary and never used as a punishment.

Within Aquila, restrictive interventions include:

2.1 Reasonable Force (physical intervention)

Physical intervention used to prevent a pupil from:

- hurting themselves or others
- damaging property
- causing serious disorder

This must be reasonable, proportionate and necessary.

2.2 Restraint

Any action (physical or non-physical) that restricts a pupil’s movement, including:

- holding or restricting limbs
- blocking a pupil’s movement or exit
- using furniture or positioning to limit freedom of movement

2.3 Seclusion

Keeping a pupil away from others and preventing them from leaving a space.

Seclusion is not the same as time-out or calming spaces where pupils can leave freely.

3. Principles Governing Use of Restrictive Interventions

Restrictive interventions within Aquila schools must always be:

- Used only when necessary
- A last resort, after preventative and de-escalation strategies
- The least restrictive option for the shortest possible time
- Focused on safety, never punishment
- Reviewed to identify patterns, triggers and to promote learning and reduction in incidents

School will actively work to reduce reliance on restrictive interventions over time, particularly for vulnerable pupils. Monitoring will demonstrate the reduction of restrictive interventions.

4. Prevention and De-escalation (Clearer Expectations)

4.1 Prevention

All Aquila schools must demonstrate strong preventative practice, including:

- clear routines and expectations
- trauma-informed approaches
- reasonable adjustments for SEND pupils
- proactive behaviour support planning
- positive relationships grounded in Nurture and Trust and reflected in the Aquila Relational Policy

4.2 De-escalation

Before any restrictive intervention, staff must use appropriate strategies such as:

- calm verbal prompts
- offering choices
- distraction or redirection
- increased personal space
- access to calming strategies or trusted adults

Restrictive interventions may only be used when these strategies are unsuccessful or inappropriate due to immediate risk.

5. Explicit Safeguards: Unsafe Practice

The Trust is explicit that unsafe practices must never be used.

Staff must not:

- ever apply pressure to the neck, throat, chest or abdomen as this is unsafe
- restrict breathing, circulation or the airway
- use prone (face-down) restraint

Ground-based interventions carry significantly increased risk and must be:

- avoided wherever possible
- ended as quickly as safety allows

Any intervention causing concern about a pupil's breathing, consciousness or medical condition must stop immediately and be treated as a medical emergency.

6. Everyday Contact vs Restrictive Interventions

6.1 Everyday Physical Contact (Not Restrictive)

Examples include:

- guiding a pupil by the hand
- comforting a distressed child
- physical contact during PE or play

6.2 Restrictive Interventions

Examples include:

- blocking a pupil from leaving a room
- holding a pupil to prevent movement
- physically escorting a pupil who is resisting

6.3 Significant Incidents (Recording Required)

Any incident involving:

- reasonable force
- restraint
- seclusion

must be recorded on Bromcom (see Section 8) and parental reporting.

7. SEND and Vulnerable Pupils

For pupils with SEND or additional vulnerabilities, Aquila schools will:

- maintain up-to-date behaviour support plans and risk assessments
- document reasonable adjustments and preventative strategies
- involve families and professionals where appropriate
- focus on reducing restrictive interventions through proactive planning

Any repeated use of restrictive interventions must trigger review and additional support, not blame.

8. Statutory Recording and Reporting (From 1 April 2026)

8.1 Recording Requirements

From 1 April 2026, schools must record all significant incidents involving:

- reasonable force
- restraint
- seclusion

Records must be completed:

- as soon as practicable
- no later than the same day, except in exceptional circumstances

Each record must include:

- pupil(s) and staff involved
- date, time, location and approximate duration
- relevant pupil needs (including SEND)
- what happened, including triggers and de-escalation attempted
- why the intervention was necessary
- any injuries or medical attention required
- follow-up actions and support

8.2 Systems

Each Aquila school will:

- log incidents on Bromcom
- ensure same-day recording is possible
- identify senior leaders responsible for oversight and quality assurance

8.3 Reporting to Parents

For significant incidents involving the use of force, parents must be informed:

- as soon as practicable
- no later than the same day, except in exceptional circumstances

This will normally be done in writing (email or MCAS), in a clear, factual and respectful manner.

9. Post-Incident Support and Review

After any restrictive intervention:

- pupils will be supported to re-regulate and reflect
- staff involved will be offered support and supervision
 - incidents will be reviewed to identify: triggers and patterns
 - effectiveness of de-escalation
 - learning to reduce future risk

This reflects Aquila's commitment to Integrity, Care and continuous improvement.

10. Training and Staff Understanding

All staff will receive regular briefings on:

- changes to legal powers and limits
- prevention and de-escalation
- what must be recorded and reported from April 2026

Staff in higher-risk settings (SRPs) will receive tailored training and supervision.

Aquila explicitly rejects a "no-contact" culture. Staff must feel confident to act lawfully and proportionately to keep pupils safe.

11. Governance and Trust Oversight

Trust leaders and governors/trustees will:

- review restrictive intervention data regularly
- monitor:
 - frequency and patterns
 - repeat incidents
 - any disproportionate impact on groups (e.g. SEND, gender, ethnicity)
- use oversight to support improvement, not assign blame

12. Key Messages for All Staff

- Reasonable force is a protective power, not a punishment
- Always use the least restrictive option and for the shortest time
- Prevention and de-escalation are everyone's responsibility
- Good recording and timely communication protect pupils, staff and the Trust

13. Summary

The April 2026 guidance:

- does not remove existing legal powers
- strengthens expectations around prevention, proportionality and learning from incidents
- clarifies what counts as restrictive practice
- introduces statutory recording and reporting requirements

By preparing early, Aquila ensures that practice across all our primary schools reflects our shared values of Nurture, Trust and Aspiration, keeping children safe while continually reducing the need for restrictive interventions.