



Reducing Restraint, Restrictive Interventions & Use of Reasonable Force Policy

for adoption by all CDAT schools

This Reducing Restraint, Restrictive Interventions and Use of Reasonable Force Policy is informed by the Christian values which are the basis for all of CDAT's work and any actions taken under this policy will reflect this.

'Blessed are those who act justly, who always do what is right'

Psalm 106:3

Approved by	Date	Review Schedule	Date of next review
Education Effectiveness committee	September 2026	September 2026 then annually	September 2027

1. Policy Statement and Core Principles

Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT) is a Church of England Multi-Academy Trust dedicated to providing an environment rooted in Christian values where the care, welfare, safety and security of all pupils and staff are paramount. We recognise that restrictive interventions have significant physical and psychological implications; therefore, they are utilised only as a last resort when less restrictive measures have been exhausted or are deemed insufficient to maintain safety.

This policy is explicitly aligned with the Department for Education (DfE) statutory and non-statutory guidance: *Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026)*.

CDAT is committed to the following five core principles:

1. **Safeguarding:** Prioritising the welfare, dignity, and human rights of pupils and staff through trauma-informed practice.
2. **Prevention:** Implementing robust proactive strategies and de-escalation techniques to minimise the need for restrictive measures.
3. **Staff Support:** Providing high-quality training and comprehensive post-incident support to ensure staff act safely and with defensible professional judgement.
4. **Statutory Recording:** Adhering to rigorous legal duties regarding the recording and reporting of all significant incidents.
5. **Data-Driven Improvement:** Centrally interrogating incident data to identify trends, improve support for pupils with SEND, and inform Trust-wide training needs.

Legal Framework

This policy is underpinned by:

- **Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Sections 93 and 93A):** Establishing the power to use reasonable force and the duty to record/report significant incidents.
- **Education Act 1996:** Governing the power to search pupils for prohibited items.
- **The Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025:** Mandating procedures for non-force restraint and seclusion, including the requirement that schools establish clear recording procedures for each incident.
- **The Equality Act 2010:** Protecting against discrimination and requiring reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND.
- **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974:** Ensuring the safety of employees and pupils.

2. Definitions of Terms

Definitions are drawn from DfE (April 2026) and the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) to ensure a unified language across CDAT. These measures are safety-based and never disciplinary.

Term	Definition
Physical Contact	Physical contact that is non-restrictive, culturally appropriate, and necessary for care or instruction. This includes comforting a distressed pupil, guiding a young child by the hand, demonstrating a PE skill or musical instrument technique, administering first aid, or praising a pupil. This does not constitute reasonable force or restraint and does not require statutory recording.

Restrictive Intervention	An umbrella term for deliberate acts that prevent, restrict, or subdue a pupil's movement, liberty, or freedom to act independently.
Reasonable Force	The minimum physical force necessary for the shortest time required to prevent injury, serious damage, criminal offences, or significant disorder.
Restraint	A non-disciplinary intervention that immobilises a pupil or limits movement (e.g. holding a pupil's arms to their sides or removing a walking aid).
Seclusion	A non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving. This should only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation.
Significant Incident	Any incident where the use of force goes beyond everyday appropriate physical contact (like first aid or guiding) and requires statutory recording.

3. Prevention, De-escalation, and Staff Training

CDAT adopts a trauma-informed, preventative de-escalation approach. Every pupil identified as requiring potential restrictive intervention must have a support plan. This document must focus on precipitating factors (internal/external triggers), matched with supportive approaches to de-escalate tension before a crisis occurs. Where a support plan is not in place because an incident was not anticipated, a My Safety and Support Plan (see *Appendix 1 for example proforma*) or equivalent support plan will be written.

CPI Training Infrastructure

CDAT utilises the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) Safety Intervention programme, which is BILDACT accredited and RRN-compliant.

- CDAT maintains a central infrastructure of CPI Certified Instructors.
- CDAT Instructors facilitate annual refreshers. All CDAT staff have access to Verbal Intervention and Safety Intervention training.
- Training includes the Opt-Out Sequence, ensuring staff continually assess the risk of continuing a hold against the risk of ending it, and physiological/psychological monitoring for medical warning signs.

Six Core Strategies

To support the reduction of restrictive interventions, CDAT encourages:

1. Leadership toward organisational change.
2. Use of data to inform practice.
3. Workforce development (CPI training).
4. Use of seclusion/restraint reduction tools.
5. Pupil and family inclusion (Co-production of support plan).
6. Rigorous post-incident debriefing.

4. Thresholds for Use: When Restrictive Interventions May Be Used

Restrictive interventions are exceptional. They are lawful only when they are necessary, proportionate, and the least restrictive option.

Exceptional Circumstances

Staff may only intervene to prevent a pupil from:

- Causing injury to themselves or others.
- Committing a criminal offence.
- Causing serious damage to property.
- Causing significant disorder.

The Five-Part Professional Judgement Test

Before and during an intervention, staff must assess:

1. **Necessity:** Is there an immediate risk of harm? Have de-escalation strategies been exhausted?
2. **Proportionality:** Is the force the minimum required for the shortest time?
3. **Pupil Welfare and Dignity:** Is the pupil's psychological safety being considered? Is the environment as private as possible?
4. **Vulnerabilities and SEND:** How do communication needs, sensory sensitivities, or past trauma affect the pupil's experience of physical contact?
5. **Equality Implications:** Does this response disproportionately impact pupils with protected characteristics? Are reasonable adjustments being made?

IMPORTANT: Restrictive interventions must **never** be used as a punishment, a disciplinary sanction or to enforce compliance.

5. Statutory Power and Unacceptable Practices

The following are strictly prohibited and may lead to disciplinary action/safeguarding referrals:

- Any hold covering the mouth/nose or restricting the respiratory system.
- Pressure to the neck, throat, chest, or abdomen.
- Any technique relying on pain for compliance.
- Ground restraint must be avoided wherever possible. If a pupil is unintentionally brought to the ground, staff must re-position into a safer alternative as quickly as possible.

IMPORTANT: See image below - CPI seated low-level restriction, which is an **acceptable** floorbased seated hold.



Reasonable Force for Searching

Under the Education Act 1996, the Headteacher or authorised staff may use reasonable force to search for legally prohibited items:

- Knives or weapons.
- Alcohol and illegal drugs.
- Stolen items.
- Tobacco/vaping substances
- Fireworks
- Pornographic images
- Any article likely to be used to commit an offence, cause injury, or damage property. Force must **never** be used to search for items banned only by school rules (e.g. mobile phones).

6. Seclusion Protocol

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary safety measure for extreme emotional dysregulation where there is an immediate risk of harm to others.

- **Environment:** The space must be safe, non-threatening and sensory-appropriate.
- **Supervision:** The pupil must be under continuous, active supervision at all times.
- **Termination:** Seclusion must end the moment the immediate risk of harm has reduced. It must never be implemented through the threat of punishment.

7. Record Keeping and Reporting

This section of the policy reflects the statutory guidance from the DfE issued under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Recording Requirements

Significant incidents, including all uses of seclusion or restraint, must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable after the event.

Records should be completed by the staff member(s) involved, who should endeavour to do this **no later than the same day as the incident** (*Appendix 2*).

If a restraint incident also includes a significant use of force, schools should only report it as a significant use of force incident; **it must not be reported twice.**

Records must include:

- Names of involved pupils/staff and witness accounts.
- Date, time, location, and duration.
- Specific de-escalation strategies attempted (Primary/Secondary interventions).
- Type/degree of force used and why it was assessed as necessary.
- Medical logs sign-off for all parties.

Parent/Carer Notification

Parents/carers must be informed of any significant incident as soon as practicable and **no later than the same day** (unless informing the parents/carers would likely result in serious harm to the pupil). If appropriate, parents/carers may be informed by phone or in person first, prior to information being communicated in writing.

Where parent/carers notification is withheld under the statutory exception (due to a likelihood of serious harm to the pupil), the school must notify the Local Authority Safeguarding Team/LADO immediately on the same day.

In addition to notifying parents/carers of the incident, schools **must supply parents/carers with a copy of the written record** of the seclusion or restraint (*Appendix 3*).

The report to parents/carers must include:

- The time, date, location, and approximate duration of the intervention.
- A brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that specific instance.
- A brief account of the type of force applied and the degree of force used.
- Details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable.

CDAT schools will invite parents/carers to discuss the incident, review the pupil's support plan (if applicable) and agree preventative strategies. Where a support plan is not in place as the incident was not anticipated, a My Safety and Support Plan (*see Appendix 1*) or equivalent will be written.

8. Post-Incident Support and Review

CDAT mandates a three-stage process following any restrictive intervention:

1. **Immediate Welfare:** Medical checks for pupil and staff. First aid and same-day parent/carers notification (cross-referenced with Section 7).
2. **Emotional Support:** Access to pastoral care. Staff utilise Therapeutic Rapport to rebuild trust and repair the relationship once the pupil is in a state of "Tension Reduction."
3. **Reflective Debrief:** A mandatory debrief (24-72 hours post-incident) involving staff and the pupil (using appropriate communication modes) to identify triggers and update the MSSP.

For non-verbal pupils or those with complex SEND, the debrief must utilise augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), visual supports, or trusted key workers to capture the child's experience and feelings accurately.

9. Governance and CDAT Oversight

Local Governing Committees (LGCs) and Trust Board

LGCs and the Trust Board must take reasonable steps to ensure that the school's procedures for recording and reporting use of force, seclusion, and restraint are fully complied with.

LGCs must oversee policy compliance and data must be regularly reviewed and scrutinised by LGCs specifically via the Headteacher's Report to identify trends and ensure the welfare of pupils with SEND or protected characteristics.

Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT) Notification

The Central CDAT Team must be notified of **every** seclusion and/or restrictive intervention (see *Appendix 2 and 3*). The Trust uses this data to conduct a residual risk analysis, identify training gaps, and to deploy CPI Instructors for targeted support where needed.

10. Complaints and Allegations

Complaints are managed under the CDAT Complaints Policy.

Allegations against staff are managed via *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and Local Authority Designated Officer referral processes.

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – My Safety and Support Plan

Appendix 2 – School Significant Incident Reporting Form

Appendix 3 – Parent/Carer Notification of Significant Incident Form Appendix

Appendix 4 – CDAT Central Team Notification

Appendix 1

My Safety and Support Plan

Click here: [My Safety and Support Plan](#)

Available on CPI website by logging into My Account.



My Safety and Support Plan

Name	
Signature	Date
Name of staff helping me to develop my plan	
Signature	Date

Appendix 2

School Significant Incident Reporting Form

1. Chronology and Incident Identification

This section establishes the statutory data required by the April 2026 DfE guidance. This form must be completed within 24 hours of the incident.

Pupil Name	
Year Group / Class	
SEND Status Code	
Staff Directly Involved	
Witnesses (Staff and Pupils)	
Date of Incident	
Time Incident Started	
Time Incident Ended	
Total Duration	
Precise Location	

2. Pre-Intervention: De-escalation and Context

Contextual Narrative

Provide a factual account of the events leading to the incident, including known triggers (e.g., sensory overload, peer conflict, transitions, or perceived rejection).

De-escalation Log: Primary and Secondary Preventive Interventions

Strategy Type	Specific Action Taken & Pupil Response
Supportive (empathic approach)	
Directive (clear instruction/limit setting)	
Environmental Adaptations (e.g. regulation area/sensory space)	

Sensory Aids (fidgets, movement, deep pressure)	
Other (reduced language, change of adult)	

3. Justification for Restrictive Intervention

Statutory Justification

In accordance with the April 2026 DfE guidance, force was used to:

- ☐ Prevent injury to themselves or others.
- ☐ Prevent a criminal offence.
- ☐ Prevent serious damage to property.
- ☐ Prevent significant disorder.

Explain why the de-escalation strategies above were assessed as insufficient or ineffective at the time (e.g., immediate risk of harm to self/others).

4. Technical Details of Restrictive Intervention

Type of Intervention

- ☐ Seclusion: Confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving for safety purposes.
- ☐ Disengagement Skill: Physical action used to gain release from harmful contact.
- ☐ Holding Skill (Low Restriction): Prompting or guiding movement (Hold and Stabilise).
- ☐ Holding Skill (Medium Restriction): Allowing movement while maintaining a hold (Pull/Push).
- ☐ Holding Skill (High Restriction): All movements are limited to manage high-risk behaviour (Lever).

Degree of Force and Position

- ☐ Standing
- ☐ Seated

Description of hold:

Observation of Risk Reduction

If the total duration of the hold exceeded 10 minutes, specify why a non-physical alternative was not reasonably practicable at that juncture.

Describe the specific physical/verbal cues indicating risk reduction and the staff's subsequent reduction in restriction levels.

5. Medical Assessment and Welfare Sign-Off

Pupil Welfare

Observed Physical Injuries: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Observed Emotional Distress: ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, detail below:

Staff Welfare

Observed Physical Injuries: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Wellbeing Concerns / Debrief Required: ☐ Yes ☐ No

First Aid / Medical Referral Provided: _____

If yes, detail below:

6. Safety Declaration and Monitoring

Medical Warning Signs Checklist:

☐ Respiratory (AB): (e.g., Change in breathing pattern, gasping, wheezing)

☐ Cardiovascular (C): (e.g., Blue lips/fingernails/ear lobes, sudden paleness, rapid pulse)

☐ Psychosocial: (e.g., Sudden cessation of struggle, unresponsiveness, vomiting)

Detailed Observations:

7. Parent/Carer Notification

Statutory Duty: Parents/carers must be notified no later than the same day of the incident.

Name of Parent/Carer Notified	Brief detail e.g. by phone / in person. <i>MUST also be confirmed in writing.</i>	Date & Time	Staff Member

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Statutory Exception

[] Parent/carer notification was withheld because it was assessed that informing the parent/carer would likely result in serious harm to the pupil. (If checked, the Local Authority must be notified immediately).

8. Compliance and Governance

CDAT Central Team Notification

[] CDAT Central Team notified of this significant incident.

Date of Notification: _____

Local Governing Committee (LGC) Oversight

LGC Lead for Safeguarding: _____ Date: _____

(Signature to confirm this incident was audited as part of the monthly safety trend analysis)

9. Final Signatures

Role	Name	Signature	Date
Staff Member Completing Form			
Headteacher / Senior Leader Reviewer			

This form must be signed and reviewed within 24 hours of the incident.

Appendix 3

Parent/Carer Notification of Significant Incident Form

1. Chronology and Incident Identification

This section establishes the statutory data required by the April 2026 DfE guidance. This form must be completed within 24 hours of the incident.

Pupil Name	
Year Group / Class	
SEND Status Code	
Date of Incident	
Approximate Duration	
Precise Location	

2. Statutory Justification

In accordance with the April 2026 DfE guidance, force was used to:

- ☐ Prevent injury to themselves or others.
- ☐ Prevent a criminal offence.
- ☐ Prevent serious damage to property.
- ☐ Prevent significant disorder.

Justification for Restrictive Intervention

Explain why the de-escalation strategies above were assessed as insufficient or ineffective at the time (e.g., immediate risk of harm to self/others).

3. Technical Details of Restrictive Intervention

Type of Intervention

- ☐ Seclusion: Confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving for safety purposes.
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- ☐ Holding Skill (Medium Restriction): Allowing movement while maintaining a hold (Pull/Push).

☐ Holding Skill (High Restriction): All movements are limited to manage high-risk behaviour (Lever).

Degree of Force and Position

☐ Standing

☐ Seated

Observed Physical Injuries

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, detail below:

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4. Parent/Carer Notification

Name of Parent/Carer Notified	Brief detail e.g. by phone / in person. <i><u>MUST</u> also be confirmed in writing.</i>	Date & Time	Staff Member

Appendix 4

CDAT Central Team Notification

Please save **Significant Incident Reporting Form & Parent/Carer Notification** on CPOMS / Compass and notify Inclusion Strategic Lead.