



Orange Tree School

Use of Reasonable Force and Physical Intervention Policy

Independent School Standards: paragraphs 7,9,11,16, 34



Target Audience (s):	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> External suppliers or visitors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regulatory / Legal bodies <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (e.g. Patients) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parents
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Frequency of review:	1 year
Last review date:	26/01/2026
Next Scheduled Review:	26/01/2027



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1. Policy Statement

Orange Tree School is committed to providing a safe, calm, and supportive environment in which all students can learn and thrive. We take a preventative, relational, and trauma-informed approach to behaviour support and do not routinely use physical restraint.

Physical intervention is not a behaviour management strategy at Orange Tree School. Orange Tree School does not admit students with a profile of significant behaviour difficulties where physical restraint will be required. However, we recognise that there may be rare and exceptional circumstances where staff are legally permitted and professionally required to use reasonable force to keep students, staff, or others safe. This policy sets out how Orange Tree School understands, minimises, and governs the use of reasonable force in line with current statutory guidance.

2. Legal Framework

This policy is informed by and aligned with:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (sections 93 and 93A)
- Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- DfE Guidance: *Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools* (April 2026)

All staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in specific circumstances; however, the use of force must always be lawful, necessary, proportionate, and for the shortest possible time.

3. Definitions

Reasonable Force: Using no more force than is necessary for the minimum amount of time to prevent harm, damage, or serious disorder.

Restrictive Intervention: Any action that restricts a student's movement or freedom. This includes physical restraint and non-physical restriction.

Physical Intervention: Direct physical contact intended to prevent immediate harm or the removal of a physical object that could cause harm.

Seclusion: Confining a student away from others and preventing them from leaving. *Orange Tree School does not use seclusion. However, we do use space for reflective practice after an incident.*

4. Our Approach at Orange Tree School

At Orange Tree School:

- Physical restraint is not routinely used and is always a last resort
- Prevention, de-escalation, and emotional regulation are prioritised
- Behaviour is understood as communication
- Staff focus on co-regulation, relationship repair, and dignity

We aim to minimise the need for any restrictive intervention through:

- Understanding all students individually
- Individualised support plans and risk assessments
- Predictable routines and environments
- Sensory and emotional regulation strategies
- Skilled verbal de-escalation
- Staff consistency and relational safety

5. When Reasonable Force May Be Used

Reasonable force may only be used when all other strategies have been exhausted or are inappropriate, and when it is necessary to prevent a student from:

- Causing injury to themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence
- Causing serious damage to property
- Causing serious disorder that places people at risk

Any decision to use reasonable force must be based on a dynamic risk assessment at that moment.

6. Principles Governing Use of Reasonable Force

If reasonable force is used, staff must ensure that it is:

- **Necessary** – to prevent immediate harm
- **Proportionate** – minimum force required
- **Time-limited** – for the shortest duration possible
- **Respectful** – maintaining dignity and safeguarding

Reasonable force is never used:

- As a punishment
- To enforce compliance
- To manage low-level behaviour
- In a way that restricts breathing, circulation, or airway

7. Absconding and Leaving Site

At Orange Tree School, absconding from site is rare. Where learners leave or attempt to leave the school site, this is understood as communication of distress, not wilful defiance or behaviour to be controlled.

Key principles:

- The school site is secure, and gates are normally closed and locked. However, when gates are opened for operational reasons, learners may have the opportunity to leave the site.
- Staff do not routinely block exits, chase, or restrain learners who attempt to leave site, either via gates or by climbing fences.
- Physical intervention to prevent leaving site would only be considered where there is an immediate and serious risk to life or injury, and no other reasonable option is available.
- Responses prioritise calm communication, space, de-escalation, and encouragement to return.
- All incidents are treated as safeguarding concerns and managed proportionately.

Where a learner leaves site:

- A dynamic risk assessment is undertaken immediately.
- Senior leadership and the Designated Safeguarding Lead are informed.
- Parents/carers are contacted promptly.
- Where possible, staff will maintain the learner within their line of sight, without chasing, as pursuit can increase risk and distress.
- Emergency services are contacted if there is an immediate risk to the learner or others.

Following any incident:

- The learner's individual risk assessment is reviewed and updated.
- Preventative strategies are strengthened in line with the Learning and Relationship Policy.
- Practice is reviewed to reduce future risk, rather than escalating restriction.

Difficulty arriving at school, including anxiety-based non-attendance or EBSA, is not considered absconding and is managed through pastoral and safeguarding procedures rather than physical intervention. Staff may step outside the school grounds to speak with a learner who is struggling to enter school, but they will not use force. If a learner subsequently absconds, the above procedures will be followed.

8. Positive Touch Support

At Orange Tree School, we recognise that there may be occasions where positive touch plays an important role in helping pupils feel safe, reassured, and emotionally supported, and in supporting their social, emotional, and mental wellbeing.

Positive touch refers to non-intrusive, respectful physical contact that supports pupils to feel safe and regulated. When used appropriately, positive touch can help to strengthen professional relationships, support emotional regulation, and contribute to de-escalation.

Staff will always use professional judgement, taking into account each pupil's age, needs, history, communication style, and individual preferences. Positive touch will never be assumed and will be guided by consent wherever possible. Staff will not use positive touch if they do not feel comfortable or confident that it is appropriate.

Examples of positive touch may include (where appropriate to the pupil and context):

- A brief, reassuring touch on the arm or shoulder
- Holding a pupil's hand to offer reassurance or guidance
- A side hug or similar contact where a pupil has clearly requested this
- Practical support such as helping with a coat, shoelaces, or during cooking activities
- Calming or grounding touch during moments of emotional dysregulation

Positive touch:

- Is never secretive and should, wherever possible, be observable by others
- Is never forceful or restrictive
- Is not used as a behaviour management strategy
- Is not expected of all staff, and staff boundaries are respected

Positive touch does not involve restricting a pupil's movement and is not a form of physical restraint.

As a trauma-informed school, we recognise that positive touch may be inappropriate or distressing for some pupils due to personal needs, sensory sensitivities, or past experiences. Decisions around touch will always be purposeful, mindful, and individualised.

Any physical contact that causes concern, or may have been misinterpreted, must be reported immediately to a Designated Safeguarding Lead. Staff are encouraged to self-report and to seek guidance where they are unsure, in order to ensure safeguarding and professional support.

9. Students with SEND and Vulnerabilities

Orange Tree School recognises that students with SEND, trauma histories, or communication difficulties may be disproportionately affected by restrictive interventions.

We therefore:

- Seek to understand triggers and unmet needs
- Make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010
- Co-produce support strategies with students and families where appropriate
- Use staff who know the student well to support regulation

Any increased likelihood of physical intervention is addressed through risk assessment and preventative planning, not routine practice. If a student continually requires physical intervention, the school will need to consider if they are the correct provision as Orange Tree School does not accept children with significant and ongoing behaviour needs that require restrictive interventions to manage behaviour and for safety reasons.

10. Staff Training and Expectations

- Staff are trained in de-escalation and relational behaviour support
- Only staff who have received appropriate training may use physical intervention unless deemed necessary and the only appropriate safety method left
- Staff are supported in decision-making where actions are reasonable and lawful

Staff are expected to prioritise safety while acting calmly, professionally, and reflectively.

11. Recording and Reporting

Any significant incident involving the use of reasonable force will be:

- Recorded in writing as soon as practicable (same day where possible)
- Logged in line with statutory recording requirements
- Reported to parents/carers as soon as practicable

Records will include:

- Names of student and staff involved
- Date, time, location, and duration
- Reason force was necessary
- Description of intervention used
- Any injuries or follow-up support

12. Post-Incident Support and Review

Following any incident involving reasonable force:

- The student will be supported to recover and regulate
- Staff involved will be offered debrief and support
- A reflective review will take place to identify learning and prevention
- Behaviour support plans will be reviewed where appropriate

The purpose of review is learning and prevention, not blame.

13. Monitoring and Oversight

The Headteacher and senior leadership team will:

- Monitor any incidents involving reasonable force
- Review patterns and trends
- Ensure compliance with statutory duties
- Use data to inform training and preventative practice

14. Ridgeway Hospital School Site – Additional Considerations

Orange Tree School also operates provision at the Ridgeway Hospital School site. Students educated on this site are receiving education alongside inpatient medical and mental health support. As such, additional considerations apply.

At the Ridgeway Hospital School site:

- The school continues to operate a no-restraint-as-routine approach, with physical intervention remaining a last resort only.
- If it is deemed that a student presents with a risk of needing physical intervention, the school will liaise closely with the medical team to share and agree strategies to allow the student to be able to access education safely. This may be on the school site or on the hospital ward.
- The primary responsibility for physical intervention and restraint within the hospital environment lies with clinical staff, in line with NHS policies and procedures.
- School staff will not lead or initiate physical restraint unless there is an immediate and serious risk of harm and no other appropriate professional is available.
- Any decision to use reasonable force will take account of the student's medical, psychiatric, and emotional presentation, and staff will defer to clinical guidance wherever possible.
- School staff will work closely with hospital staff to support de-escalation, emotional regulation, and removal of triggers, rather than physical intervention.
- The hospital will supply a HCA to support students who are risk assessed and may require physical intervention while on the school site.

Where an incident occurs on the Ridgeway Hospital School site:

- The incident will be recorded in line with this policy and the hospital's own reporting procedures
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed
- Parents/carers will be notified as appropriate, in consultation with hospital staff
- A reflective review will take place with education and clinical teams where relevant

Orange Tree School recognises that students educated within a hospital setting may present with heightened levels of distress or dysregulation. Our role within this context is to provide



educational continuity, relational safety, and calm support, while working within the wider clinical framework to ensure students' safety and wellbeing.

15. Complaints and Allegations

Any concerns or complaints regarding the use of reasonable force will be addressed through the school's Complaints Policy.

Allegations against staff will be managed in line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and safeguarding procedures.

This policy should be read alongside the Safeguarding Policy and the Learning and Relationship Policy (formally behaviour policy).

Orange Tree School is committed to safety, dignity, and relational practice. We do not expect to routinely use reasonable force due to the nature of the students who attend the school, including those educated within hospital settings.