REDUCING THE NEED FOR RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS IN SCHOOLS

Potten End Church of England Primary School

Policy Review

This policy was agreed by the Governing Board on…October 2026…

It is due for review on… October 2027…

Signature ……. Date ……

Head Teacher

Signature ……. Date ……

Chair of Governors

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1 Introduction and purpose of policy

On rare occasions, school staff may need to use restrictive interventions to safeguard pupils or maintain discipline within the school environment. Department of Education, *Keeping children safe in education, 2025 Statutory guidance for schools and colleges* recognises that there are circumstances where it is appropriate for staff to use reasonable force to achieve these aims and states that schools must not have a no contact policy as this can put staff and pupils at risk.

This guidance has been written to help schools develop policies around the use of restrictive interventions so that any interventions used are lawful and carried out in a safe and responsible manner. The aim of any guidance is to ensure staff are confident about the context in which they have the power to use restrictive interventions and restraint in order to safeguard pupil welfare.

Restrictive interventions and reasonable force should only be used when they are **necessary and proportionate**, after de-escalation strategies have been attempted where appropriate and when there is a clear risk of serious harm to the pupil or others, or serious damage to property or to prevent disorder.

Decisions on when to use restrictive intervention is a matter of professional judgement, and any intervention or restraint should be proportionate and reasonable in the context of the perceived risk and in the pupil's best interests. This would normally be after de-escalation strategies have failed. Should such an intervention be required the school should record the details, including any injury, and contact the parent***/***carer on the same day to explain the circumstances involved.

This guidance adopts the statutory terminology from *Restrictive interventions, including reasonable force, in schools (DfE, 2026)*, including the definitions of 'restrictive intervention', 'reasonable force', 'significant incident', 'restraint' and 'seclusion'. Restrictive intervention refers to any action, physical or non-physical, that restricts a pupil's movement.

2 Legal framework

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives schools the power to **use reasonable force** to:

- prevent a pupil from hurting themselves or others
- prevent a pupil from causing serious damage to property
- remove a disruptive pupil from a classroom
- prevent a pupil from causing disorder among pupils during school activities, including during off-site visits

- prevent a pupil from leaving a classroom where there is a risk to their safety or the safety of others.

Section 93A of the Education and Inspection Act ("the 2006 Act"), states schools must have procedures for recording and informing parents of significant incidents when force is used against pupils.

Additionally, 'The Schools (Recording and Reporting of Seclusion and Restraint) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2025' which requires written record where a pupil is secluded or immobilises a pupil and supplying a record to the parent as soon as possible.

Statutory guidance makes it clear that restrictive interventions and restraint cannot be used as a punishment. It is essential that schools need to have effective reporting and recording systems, data reviews of incident of restraint and seclusion, and reviews of relevant policies for example, safeguarding and behaviour policies and staff training needs and records.

Section 550ZB of the Education Act 1996 also gives schools the power to **use reasonable force to carry out searches** for prohibited items where the young person has not consented to the search. Prohibited items are:

- knives and weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- tobacco and cigarette papers
- fireworks
- pornographic images
- any article that has been or likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage property.

Schools should read this current guidance alongside the following DfE Guidance

Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK published in September 2025

When conducting searches, schools/colleges should refer to *the DfE Searching, screening and confiscation in schools - GOV.UK*. The advice document was published in July 2022, and the guidance was last updated on GOV.UK in July 2023.

Schools should also refer to the following government guidance for further details: *DfE Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools Guidance for schools in England, April 2026.*

Use of reasonable force in schools - GOV.UK

3 Senior leadership responsibilities

Senior leaders in schools, including governors and head teachers, should ensure the following:

- There is a culture of respect and positive relationships between staff and pupils so that the need for high-level intervention is reduced.

- All staff are aware of the school policy and their powers and responsibilities regarding the use of restrictive interventions and restraint and their part in implementing this policy.

- Staff are able to use de-escalation techniques strategies in the first instance unless the situation requires an immediate physical response.

- All staff receive appropriate training in behaviour management that promotes positive relationships, including de-escalation techniques so that they are confident to deal with incidents and only use restrictive interventions where necessary.

- Schools may wish to consider whether certain staff members should receive specialist training on restrictive interventions and restraint techniques.

- The school will assess any risk posed to staff and take steps to reduce these risks. Staff do not place themselves at risk when using physical restraint and are able to access medical treatment and take time off if injured.

- The use of restrictive interventions and restraint is part of an overarching strategy of behaviour management and therapeutic support within the school environment and that its use is closely aligned to the school's behaviour policies.

- Staff are aware of any agreed adjustments to the policy and procedures that are in place for individual pupils who are vulnerable due to learning and other disabilities, autism or mental health difficulties (see section 5).

- Staff are supported to use restrictive interventions and restraint where this is within acceptable parameters and in line with school policies.

- Support is offered to pupils and staff involved in incidents requiring restrictive interventions and restraint.

- There is a system in place to record and monitor incidents where restrictive interventions or restraint have been used.

- The policy on restrictive interventions and restraint is reviewed at least annually and more frequently were thought appropriate.

4 Restrictive interventions and use of reasonable force

School powers allow the use of reasonable force to control or restrain pupils where necessary and its lawful use will be a defence to any related criminal prosecution or where an allegation is made against teaching staff.

To ensure the welfare of pupils and to protect staff from any misplaced allegations, any physical contact between staff and pupils must be appropriate within the context of the teacher/pupil relationship, the pupils' age and the circumstances. There are many examples of appropriate positive physical contact that can be used to reassure, comfort, guide or calm a pupil.

Restrictive intervention can cover a wide variety of contact with pupils of varying degrees of intrusiveness ranging from positive handling, such as gentle guiding to physical restraint. The level of intervention and the degree of force required will be determined by the circumstances and the level of assessed risk to the pupil and others.

Generally, low-level physical contact/positive handling can be used to manage most behaviour, for example gentle contact to comfort, reassure or guide a pupil away from risk.

For younger pupils, this positive handling can be used to control the child's movements in order to keep them from harm or danger. The level of contact and force that would be acceptable to achieve this would be like the actions that a reasonable parent would do to keep their own child safe.

In some situations, it may be necessary to use a restrictive intervention in order to hold back a pupil or control their movement and which involves restraint or the use of force. Where force is used, it must be ***reasonable –*** a proportionate response to the risk involved and used with a clear intent to prevent harm.

Reasonable force should involve "no more force than is needed" to achieve the desired outcome and should only be used for the purposes of restraining or controlling a pupil in order to safeguard pupils, stop damage to property or keep order in the classroom. What is reasonable force will be down to the professional

judgement of the staff member, but any use of force must be justifiable and the paramount consideration is that any action is taken in the interests of the pupil.

Staff must never use any restraint or physical restrictive intervention that restricts a pupil's airway, breathing or circulation, including pressure on the neck, chest or abdomen. Prone or ground-based restraint must be avoided and, if it occurs unintentionally, released immediately.

5 Vulnerable pupils

Some pupils may exhibit challenging behaviour in response to overstimulating environments, stressful situations or an inability to communicate distress in any other way. This can make them more vulnerable to experiencing restrictive intervention and restraint and it is likely the experience will be traumatising.

Schools should be mindful of pupils that may be vulnerable such as (but not limited to):

- children with special educational needs and disabilities (with or without an Education, Health and Care Plan)
- children who are experiencing mental health difficulties
- children who have experienced trauma in their lives, for example, looked after children, refugee children and unaccompanied minors, children living with domestic abuse and children with child protection plans.

Under the Equalities Act 2010, it is essential that schools can demonstrate that reasonable adjustments have been made to ensure any policy on physical intervention and restraint does not disadvantage these pupils.

Government guidance *Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention* also requires schools to take steps to reduce the use of physical intervention for vulnerable children and this will be a feature of any inspection carried out by the CQC and Ofsted https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-the-need-for-restraint-and-restrictive-intervention

Special schools where pupils have a high level of needs requiring regular restrictive intervention to manage behaviour may wish to consider use of a bespoke policy that takes account of the specific needs of the pupils using this guidance.

Schools must demonstrate that the specific needs of these pupils have been considered and that the school will tailor their approach accordingly to avoid discrimination against these pupils.

School policies on behaviour management should uphold the rights of vulnerable pupils, ensure their safety and dignity, and work in partnership with parents to reduce the need for restrictive interventions and restraint.

Vulnerable pupils will be subject to the requirements set out in this policy, but schools will also need to meet the following extra requirements.

- Vulnerable pupils whose behaviour is likely to increase the risk of restrictive intervention and restraint should have a plan in place from the outset and pupils and parents should be fully involved in agreeing this plan. However not all vulnerable pupils will require this.
- The plan should set out the strategies for managing challenging behaviour and should include a hierarchical response ranging from prevention, de-escalation and detailing how incidents will be dealt with.
- The plan should be based on an assessment of the pupil's particular needs and how these contribute to challenging behaviour, including any triggers for challenging behaviour and what steps can be taken to avoid these triggers and maintain a positive learning environment for the pupil.
- The plan should include any techniques for de-escalating situations and how best to manage challenging behaviour in order to avoid use of restrictive interventions and restraint.
- Staff must adapt verbal and non-verbal communication during incidents for pupils with communication needs or sensory profiles.
- Forms of restraint or restrictive intervention to be used should be identified and agreed in advance and the circumstances for its use set out clearly so that pupils and parents understand the circumstances in which it will be used.
- The plan should include which staff members will be responsible for its implementation and what specific training they will receive to support them in this role.
- Specific support plans should also cover any transitions that a pupil may experience between services or locations as movement to unfamiliar places may be a trigger for challenging behaviour.
- Schools using forms of restriction intervention involving seclusion or a withdrawal that potentially restricts a child's liberty should have written rules about how and when these measures will be used.

- Seclusion, as defined in the *DfE Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools, April 2026* may only be used as an emergency safety measure and must be recorded and reported in line with statutory requirements.

- Schools may discuss approaches with parents/carers but do not need their consent to use restrictive interventions or seclusion when it is necessary, safe and lawful.

6 Planning and prevention

6.1 Whole school

Schools should be alert to situations and circumstances that can lead to incidents that may require restrictive intervention and take active steps to avoid issues escalating.

The school should regularly review environmental factors within the school that may lead to incidents in the school or elsewhere and should consider:

- the general school environment and any potential hot-spots
- any difficulties that may arise at different times of the day, ie: breaks
- any issues around supervision of pupils
- specific environmental factors for vulnerable pupils
- specific risks related to gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality or disability
- specific risks related to gang activity
- specific risks off-site/school trips.

This should address:

- the nature of the risk and likely impact on pupils
- the likelihood of incidents
- actions and/or reasonable adjustments for vulnerable pupils
- actions to be taken to avoid incidents and reduce risk
- actions to be taken in the event of an incident in order to reduce risk to staff and pupils.

6.2 Individual pupils

All vulnerable pupils' who are at heightened risk of experiencing restrictive interventions and restraint should have an individual behaviour support plan (see section 5).

Seclusion refers to confining a pupil alone in a space from which they are prevented from leaving, physically or through perceived consequences. This requires continuous supervision and must always be recorded and reported.

Where a pupil requires restrictive intervention on more than one occasion, or where there is a known risk of restrictive intervention being required, the school should ensure an individual behaviour support plan and risk assessment are in place. This should consider their specific circumstances, any triggers to behaviours, and strategies or approaches that may reduce the number of incidents. The plan should be reviewed regularly.

Where it is known that restrictive interventions involving force or restraint may be required in order to manage an individual pupil's behaviour this should be planned for in partnership with parents and the pupil (where appropriate) and an intervention plan/risk assessment put in place.

The risk assessment should consider:

- the risks to the pupil and others from their behaviour
- the risks from use of restrictive interventions
- the risks from not intervening
- the form of restrictive intervention that would be the least restrictive.

The behaviour support plan should:

- identify the triggers to the behaviour that may lead to the need to intervene or restrain
- relevant background information, such as experiences of home life or history of abuse
- detail any de-escalation techniques that should be used in the first instance to deal with incidents
- set out what forms of restrictive interventions and restraint may be used without injury to the pupil, staff member or anyone else present
- provide details of how incidents will be reviewed and who will be involved in the review.

Individual behaviour support plans must be reviewed with the pupil and parents after any significant incident involving restrictive intervention.

Planned intervention can be viewed as positive as it demonstrates a commitment to keeping children safe and enables them to take part in the planning process.

7 Dealing with incidents

7.1 Initial consideration

Before any action is taken staff should quickly weigh up the situation and decide if intervention is needed immediately to avert risk of harm. It is for the staff member to

make a professional judgement on whether the situation requires the use of restrictive interventions and the degree of force needed.

The staff member must be clear on the justification of the action and the intended outcome of intervention, for example stopping a young child from leaving the classroom to stopping an older pupil from attacking another pupil, and how the intervention is in the best interests of those involved. This could be important in terms of providing a defence to any allegation of assault arising following the incident.

Staff should also consider the risks of not intervening, for example if no intervention is made and the pupil causes serious injury to another, the school could be considered negligent in the duty of care owed to that pupil.

7.2 De-escalation

De-escalation techniques if possible, must be used in the first instance and staff should:

- make the pupil and others present aware that the staff member is taking control of the situation
- ask other pupils to leave in order to calm the situation
- send for assistance from another staff member (particularly if restraint is likely to be needed)
- remain calm and respectful and speak slowly and clearly to the pupil to give reassurance and instructions
- be aware of their tone of voice and body language
- where possible, use minimal force/positive handling to gently guide the pupil away from danger (but be aware of risk to self)
- be aware of their own emotions and avoid allowing the situation to spiral
- if the pupil is pacing, try to remain still and avoid mirroring their anxiety
- keep a respectful distance and avoid encroaching on the pupil's personal space
- give the young person options so that they have an opportunity to resolve the situation in a dignified manner
- be specific to a pupil's SEND.

De-escalation techniques can be used where there is an opportunity to do so but not in a situation where a pupil is already at risk of harm and action is needed. However, staff can continue to use many of the techniques listed above during restraint to calm and reassure the young person.

7.3 Use of reasonable force and restraint

All staff have a duty of care to pupils and have the power to use restrictive interventions and restraint where required. However, staff can send for help if it is thought that assistance will be needed.
Use of force must be reasonable, proportionate and necessary and restraint should only be used for as long as is needed.

- Ideally, staff should not have to deal with incidents requiring restraint alone for any period of time and it is recommended that other staff attend the incident as soon as possible to reduce risk.
- Where possible, before intervening, staff should warn the pupil clearly and calmly that physical force may be used to restrain them and they should be given an opportunity to comply with any instructions to avoid this.
- When using restraint, staff should remain calm and continue to talk to the pupil calmly throughout to reassure them and let them know what is happening and why.
- The restraint should:

    - only involve the minimum of force necessary to restrict movement
    - only be used temporarily until the risk has passed
    - should not restrict breathing or blood supply
    - should avoid bringing pupil to the ground
    - should not involve any contact that may be amount to a criminal offence such as assault.

- The child or young person should be released slowly and safely when it is felt they are sufficiently in control of their emotions.
- If the restrictive intervention appears to escalate rather than reduce the risk, staff should reassess the situation and modify or cease the intervention where safe to do so.

8 Following incidents

Schools must have effective and practical recording and reporting systems. It is essential schools review these systems and ensure they are in line with the new guidance- *DfE Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools, April 2026.*

8.1 Recording and reporting incidents

- The school **must** keep a written record of every significant incident involving use of force the same day, and always as soon as possible thereafter,

including all details required by statutory guidance. See Section: Reporting the use of force (statutory guidance) Page 15: *DfE Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools, April 2026.*

This **must** cover as a minimum:

- names of pupils and staff directly involved
- any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code
- time, date, location and approximate duration of the intervention
- brief account of the incident, including what led up to the incident, identified or potential triggers if known, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used, and (where relevant) what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of any physical injuries sustained
- brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance
- any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts.

8.2 Notifying others

- The head teacher must be informed of all incidents immediately to decide on what further actions are required.
- The designated safeguarding lead should also be informed of incidents that may raise any safeguarding issues.
- The school **must** notify parents of any significant use of force, seclusion or restraint as soon as practicable and ideally the same day, in writing.
- Reports to parents/carers should include the following details as a minimum:
    - time, date, location and approximate duration of the interventions
    - brief account of why the intervention was assessed as necessary in that instance
    - brief account of what type of force was applied, and the degree of force
    - details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable.
- For seclusion or non-physical restraint, reports should describe the nature of the restrictive intervention used and why it was assessed as necessary.

- Schools should also consider inviting parents/carers to have a follow-up discussion about the incident where this is appropriate to do so.
- Where reporting to a parent may cause serious harm to the pupil, the school should report to an alternative parent (or foster carer where the child is looked after) or, if there are none, the Local Authority.

- The governing body must be updated regularly on the use of restrictive intervention, seclusion, restraint and significant incidents to identify patterns and ensure compliance with statutory duties. They must review data to identify any disproportionate use of restrictive interventions affecting pupils with protected characteristics, SEND or other vulnerabilities.
- In settings where the use of restrictive interventions and restraint is a regular feature due to pupils' individual needs the setting should have in place a system for recording, analysing and reporting incidents. This can be particularly helpful during Ofsted inspections and where an allegation or complaint is made.

8.3 Support following incidents

It should be acknowledged that the use of restrictive interventions and restraint carry an inherent risk of injury to staff and pupils involved.

Use of restrictive interventions and restraint can be upsetting for pupils and staff. Schools should have procedures in place for dealing with the follow-up of incidents so that those involved have time and space to recover and reflect on what happened. Learning can then be used to review and improve policies.

It may be necessary to ensure staff and pupils receive any required medical attention and are able to talk to someone who was not involved in the incident about what happened and why.

For vulnerable pupils, staff and parents should discuss the incident and consider whether the behaviour support plan needs to be changed and what learning can be taken from the incident.

8.4 Monitoring and reviewing incidents

Schools should monitor and review the use of force, restrictive interventions and restraint as a means of learning from incidents to improve practice and inform risk assessments and ultimately, to avoid the need for restrictive interventions and restraint. Information on incidents can help inform any risk assessment both on a whole-school level and in terms of individual or groups of pupils. This is particularly important in the case of vulnerable pupils who may be more susceptible to experiencing restrictive interventions and restraint.

When reviewing incidents, the school should consider the following:

- Was the use of restrictive intervention necessary, appropriate and proportionate?
- What steps were taken to ensure that minimum reasonable force was used?

- Have the incidents needing restrictive intervention increased/decreased?
- Are vulnerable pupils over-represented in the numbers and if so, why? Is the school confident that vulnerable pupils are not being discriminated against by policy and procedures?
- Was the length of time restrictive intervention was used kept to a minimum?
- Could alternative methods other than restrictive intervention been used?
- What steps were taken to ensure that restrictive intervention used causes a minimum of pain or distress?
- What steps were taken following restrictive intervention for the pupil and the staff involved?
- Were there separate debriefing sessions for both pupil and members of staff who have been involved in the intervention? What were the antecedents, consequences and alternative courses of action?

9 Training for staff

Training from a relevant training provider increases staff confidence in dealing with incidents and reduces risks. Training must equip staff to apply restrictive interventions safely, assess proportionality under pressure, understand individual risk assessments, and comply with statutory recording and reporting duties.

When considering training, schools should be aware that any member of staff may need to intervene in emergency situations. Schools may consider training in the context of the needs of pupils and the number and seriousness of incidents that are likely to occur in the school.

- All staff should receive training on how to prevent the need for restrictive interventions, including how to de-escalate situations and awareness of positive handling techniques.
- Schools should identify the most appropriate members of staff for specialist training in restraint techniques.
- Schools should keep a record of the types of training staff have received and those staff who have received specialist training in restraint techniques.
- Some settings such as special educational needs or pupil referral units may have a higher level of incidents requiring a higher proportion of staff to receive specialist training on positive handling techniques. Where settings have a regular need to use restrictive interventions and restraint it is recommended that all staff should be trained.

10 Publicising the guidance

It is recommended that the school guidance on restrictive interventions and restraint is part of the behaviour management policy and available on the school website.

It is important that pupils and parents are aware of the school's legal powers to use restrictive interventions and restraint and the circumstances in which it is likely to be used. It should also be acknowledged that reasonable adjustments will be made for more vulnerable pupils such as those with SEND.

Parents should be made aware that their consent is not required to use restrictive interventions and restraint. Parents should also be aware of how the school will inform them of any incidents requiring the use of restrictive interventions and restraint.

11 Complaints and allegations

The use of restrictive interventions can lead to accusations against staff by pupils and parents of improper conduct or assault, so it is essential that schools have in place clear policies and procedures around the use of restrictive interventions and restraint so that staff have a defence against such allegations.

Schools should publish the complaints policy and ensure pupils and parents know how to make a complaint following the use of restrictive interventions or restraint. When dealing with complaints and allegations it should be remembered that the onus is on the person making the complaint/allegation to set out how the member of staff did not act reasonably in the circumstances.

However, it must be demonstrated that the staff member followed agreed practice and procedure. It should be made clear to staff that force may only be used within the parameters set out in the school's policy and that any deviation from acceptable practice will leave the staff member vulnerable to complaints and allegations.

Where an incident involving restrictive intervention or physical restraint results in an allegation being made against a member of staff, the matter must be managed as an allegation against a person who works with children. The school must follow the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) procedures for managing Allegations against staff - Hertfordshire Grid for Learning who work with children and young people. All such cases must be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day, and no internal investigation should take place unless agreed with the LADO.

12. Reporting to Parents

Student Name:	
D.O.B:	
SEND Code	
Identified SEN or disability	

Date of Incident	
Time of Incident	
Duration of Incident	
Duration of Restrictive Intervention	

Recording staff name:	

Location of Incident:

Description of Restrictive Intervention

Type of Restrictive Intervention	
Physical restraint	☐
Non-physical restraint	☐
Mechanical restraint	☐
Chemical restraint	☐
Supervised seclusion	☐

Justification for restrictive intervention Why the intervention was assessed as necessary (tick all that apply):		Harm prevented by physical intervention with predicted levels (see Individual Plan) e.g. bruising to peers, lacerations, destruction of computer, 20 mins of geography lost for 15 child or young person's etc.
To prevent harm to self	☐	
To prevent harm to other children	☐	
To prevent harm to adults	☐	
To prevent damage to property	☐	
To prevent loss of learning (see plan)	☐	

Is there any physical or emotional harm caused by the use of the restrictive intervention?	Y/N	Details:
Has the student indicated that this was caused by the use of restrictive intervention?	Y/N	Actions:

Who has received a copy of this report?		
Reported to:	Method of reporting (e.g. post)	Time and date of reporting

13. Recording form

As stated in Restrictive Intervention, including the use of reasonable force, in schools (April 2026).

Triggers:
Additional factors:

De-escalation techniques used (please state order in which they were used)

Verbal advice and support		Offering services of other staff	
Calm talking		Informing of consequences	
Distraction		Taking non-threatening body position	
Reassurance		De-escalation script	
Humour		Clear instruction / warning	
Negotiation		Withdrawal from activity	
Offering choices and options		Diversion	
Other (please specify)			

Number	Description of how technique was employed
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Restrictive intervention, in sequence.

Time	Technique	Shape	Staff name

Duration of restraint:		Duration of incident:	
Additional information and justification		Additional information and justification	

Potten End Church of England (VC) Primary School

Unresolved Harm/ Details of damage to property (costs and details of harm to property and people, including medical intervention:

Management:	Details:	
How was the incident resolved?		
What are the protective and educational consequences?		
Has necessary student de-brief taken place?	Y/N	
Has necessary staff de-brief taken place?	Y/N	
Has the Risk Reduction Plan been reviewed?	Y/N	
Was there involvement of external agencies?	Y/N	

Name(s) of student witnesses:		

Verification of account by adult witnesses:			
Name	Staff signature	Verification	Date and time
		☐	
		☐	
		☐	

	Name	Signature	Date
Recording staff			
Headteacher (or delegated member of SLT)			