



USE OF REASONABLE FORCE POLICY

Whitgift School is committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of pupils and staff and in line with current relevant legislation (including the government issued 'Use of Reasonable Force' advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies July 2013), only permits physical restraint by reasonable and non-injurious means.

What is reasonable force?

The Department of Education indicates the following:

- The term “reasonable force” covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.
- Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.
- “Reasonable in the circumstances” means using no more force than is needed.
- Schools generally use force to control pupils and to restrain them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil’s path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom.
- Restraint means to hold back physically or bring a pupil under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.
- School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the pupil.
- All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force.
- This power applies to any member of staff at the school. It can also apply to people whom the Headmaster has temporarily put in charge of pupils.

Definition

For the purpose of this policy document, physical restraint is defined to be the positive application of force in order to protect/prevent a pupil from causing injury to himself or others or seriously damaging school property, or from causing disorder.

Injury implies “significant injury”; this would include actual or grievous bodily harm, physical or sexual abuse, risking the lives of, or injury to, themselves or others by wilful or reckless behaviour.

It must be shown that on any occasion where physical restraint is used there were strong indicators that if immediate action had not been taken, injury or the committing of a criminal act would have followed. The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances. In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described above, headteachers and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for “prohibited items” – please refer to the ‘Searching a Boy’ policy for more details.

Examples of such situations are:

- A pupil attacking a member of staff, or another pupil
- Pupils are fighting
- A pupil is causing, or at risk of causing injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials, substances or object
- A pupil is/ or appears to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances
- A pupil absconds from school (this will only apply if a pupil would be at serious risk if not kept in school).
- remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so
- prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit

Force must never be used as a punishment.

It is acknowledged that there is a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and children with special educational needs (SEN) with regard to use of reasonable force.

What might be regarded as constituting reasonable force?

Physical intervention can take a number of forms:

- Partial – restricting and preventing particular movements
- Total – as in the case of immobilisation

In particular:

- Physically interposing between pupils
- Blocking a pupil’s path
- Leading a pupil by the arm
- Holding
- Pushing
- Pulling
- Shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back or in more extreme circumstances using more restrictive holds.

However, staff should never act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury or pain, for example by:

- Holding a pupil round the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict the pupil's ability to breathe
- Slapping, punching, kicking or using any implement on a pupil
- Throwing an object at a pupil
- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint
- Tripping up a pupil
- Holding or pulling a pupil by the hair or ear
- Holding a pupil face down on the ground
- Touching or holding a pupil in any way that might be considered indecent.

Procedures

During an incident staff should not hesitate to act in an emergency provided they follow the policy and procedures. However, they should always satisfy themselves that the action they take would be considered justifiable by a wider audience. In any application of physical restraint, the minimum reasonable force should be used to calm down the situation. Help should be summoned from colleagues; other pupils should never be involved in the restraint. The pupil should be approached calmly but firmly. Where possible, explain the consequences of refusing to stop the behaviour and continue to communicate with the pupil throughout the incident. It should be made clear that the physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary. A calm and measured approach is needed and a teacher (member of staff) should never give the impression that they have lost their temper, or is acting out of anger or frustration or attempting to punish the pupil.

The method of restraint employed must use the minimum force for the minimum time. In dealing with these difficult and stressful situations, the following should be considered:

- Being aware of any feelings of anger
- Ways and means to summon help
- Talking as a means to calm the situation
- Ensuring a free passage of air through airways
- Providing a "soft" surface if possible
- Being aware of accessories worn by you or by the pupil that could cause injury
- Monitoring the pupil's respiration, circulation and state of consciousness
- Involving professional medical assistance from onsite practitioners

Especially do not:

- Try to manage on your own
- Stop talking, even if the pupil does not reply
- Straddle the pupil
- Push the arms up the back
- Touch the pupil near the throat or head
- Put pressure on joints or on arterial pressure points (inside of upper arm, groin, neck).

Recording of Incidents where Reasonable Force has been used

Immediately following any such incident the member of staff concerned should inform the Second Master or Deputy Headmaster or Assistant Head (Pastoral – Safeguarding Lead) of the events and then provide the short written factual report as soon as possible afterwards. It should include the following information:

- The name(s) of the pupil(s) involved and when and where the incident took place
- The names of any other staff or pupils who witnessed the incident
- The reason that force was necessary
- Briefly outline how the incident began and progressed, including details of the pupil's behaviour, what was said by each of the parties, the steps taken to defuse or calm the situation, the degree of force used, how that was applied, and for how long
- The pupil's response and the outcome of the incident
- Details of any obvious or apparent injury suffered by the pupil, or any other person, and of any damage to property
- Obtain medical report from onsite medical practitioners who were involved
- Where reasonable force has been used on a pupil, parents are to be informed by the appropriate Senior Member of Staff. Please note that parental consent is not need to use force on a student in the appropriate circumstances.
- All complaints about the use of force will be thoroughly, speedily and appropriately investigated.

Reviewed by The Second Master and The Assistant Head: August 2016

Next review: August 2017