

USE OF REASONABLE FORCE POLICY

Whitgift School is committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of students and staff and in line with current relevant legislation (including the government issued 'Use of reasonable force in schools' 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 for 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 students.
- Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a student 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 students and to restrain them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between students or blocking a student's path, or active physical contact such as leading a student by the arm out of a classroom.
- Restraint means to hold back physically or bring a student under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two students 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 student.
- 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 students.

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 student 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 willful 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

Student Policy for more details.

Examples of such situations are:

- A student is attacking a member of staff, or another student
- Students are fighting
- A student is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials, substances or objects
- A student is, or appears to be, under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances
- A student absconds from school (this will only apply if a student would be at serious risk if not kept in school)
- Removing a disruptive student from the classroom, where they have refused to follow an instruction to leave
- Preventing a student 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 students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) 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 students
- Blocking a student's path
- Leading a student by the arm
- Holding
- Pushing
- Pulling
- Shepherding a student 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 student round the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict the student's ability to breathe
- Slapping, punching, kicking or using any implement on a student
- Throwing an object at a student

- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint
- Tripping up a student
- Holding or pulling a student by the hair or ear
- Holding a student face down on the ground
- Touching or holding a student 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 students should never be involved in the restraint. The student should be approached calmly but firmly. Where possible, explain the consequences of refusing to stop the behaviour and continue to communicate with the student 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 member of staff should never give the impression that they have lost their temper, or are acting out of anger or frustration, or attempting to punish the student.

The method of restraint employed must use the minimum force for the minimum amount of 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 the member of staff or by the student that could cause injury
- Monitoring the student’s respiration, circulation and state of consciousness
- Involving professional medical assistance from onsite practitioners

Especially members of staff should not:

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

Recording of Incidents where Reasonable Force has been used

Immediately following any such incident, the member of staff involved should inform the Senior Deputy or Deputy Head (Academic) or Deputy Head (Pastoral) of the events, and then

provide a short, written, factual report as soon as possible. This should include the following information:

- The name(s) of the student(s) involved and when and where the incident took place
- The name(s) of any other staff or student(s) who witnessed the incident
- The reason that force was necessary
- A brief outline of how the incident began and progressed, including details of the student's or students' 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 student's or students' response and the outcome of the incident
- Details of any obvious or apparent injury suffered by the student(s), or any other person, and of any damage to property

The member of staff should also obtain a medical report from onsite medical practitioners who were involved.

Where reasonable force has been used on a student, parents are to be informed by the appropriate Senior Member of staff.

Please note that parental consent is not needed 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 Deputy Head (Pastoral) and Assistant Head (Pastoral & Boarding):
September 2023**

Next review: September 2024