

RESTRAINT POLICY

Application of Force

Physical intervention can take several forms. It might involve staff:

- physically interposing between pupils
- blocking a pupil's path
- holding
- pushing
- pulling
- leading a pupil by the hand or arm
- shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back, or (in extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds.

In exceptional circumstances, where there is an immediate risk of injury, a member of staff may need to take any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of 'reasonable force': for example to prevent a young pupil running off a pavement onto a busy road, or to prevent a pupil hitting someone, or throwing something.

In other circumstances staff should not act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:

- holding a pupil around the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict the pupil's ability to breathe
- slapping, punching or kicking 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
- holding a pupil by the wrist

Staff should always avoid touching or holding a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent.

Where the risk is not so urgent the member of staff should consider carefully whether physical intervention is right. **Staff should always try to deal with a situation through other strategies before using force.**

As the key issue is establishing good order, any action which could exacerbate the situation needs to be avoided. The possible consequences of intervening physically, including the risk of increasing the disruption or actually provoking an attack, need to be carefully evaluated.

The age and level of understanding of the pupil is also very relevant in those circumstances.

Physical intervention to enforce compliance with staff instructions is inappropriate. It should never be used as a substitute for good behavioural management.

Recording Incidents

It is important that there is a detailed, contemporaneous, written report of any occasion (except minor or trivial incidents) where force is used. It may help prevent any misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the incident, and it will be helpful should there be a complaint. The forms to complete are available from Year leaders, Elsas or the Headteacher.

We will keep an up-to-date record of all such incidents. Immediately following any such incident the member of staff concerned should tell a senior member of staff and the Headteacher and complete a written report as soon as possible afterwards. That will include:

- 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 (e.g. to prevent injury to the pupil, another pupil or member of staff)
- 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 injury suffered by the pupil, another pupil, or a member of staff and of any damage to property.

Staff may find it helpful to seek advice from a senior colleague or a representative of their professional association when compiling a report. They should also keep a copy of the report. Incidents involving the use of force can cause the parents of the pupil involved great concern. The Headteacher will inform parents of an incident involving their child, and give them an opportunity to discuss it. The Head teacher, will need to consider whether that should be done straight away or at the end of the school day, and whether parents should be told orally or in writing.

Complaints

Involving parents when an incident occurs with their child, plus a clear policy about physical contact with pupils that staff adhere to, should help to avoid complaints from parents. It will not prevent all complaints, however, and a dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation, either under disciplinary procedures or by the Police or Social services department under child protection procedures. The possibility that a complaint might result in a disciplinary hearing, or a criminal prosecution, or in a civil action brought by a pupil or parent, cannot be ruled out. In those circumstances it would be for the disciplinary panel or the court to decide whether the use of degree of force was reasonable in all the circumstances. It would also be likely to take account of the school's policy on restraint, whether that had been followed, and the need to prevent injury, damage, or disruption, in considering all the circumstances of the case.

Physical Contact with Pupils in Other Circumstances

There are occasions when physical contact with a pupil may be proper or necessary other than those covered by Section 550A of the 1996 Act. Some physical contact may be necessary to demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons, sports coaching, or if a member of staff has to give first aid. Young children and children with special educational needs may need staff to provide physical prompts or help. Touching may also be appropriate where a pupil is in distress and needs comforting. Staff will use their own professional judgement when they feel a pupil needs this kind of support.

There may be some children for whom touching is particularly unwelcome. For example, some pupils may be particularly sensitive to physical contact because of their cultural background, or because they have been abused. It is important that all staff receive information on these children. Physical contact can sometimes be misconstrued.

Practical considerations

Before intervening physically a member of staff should, wherever practical, tell the pupil who is misbehaving to stop, and what will happen if he or she does not. The member of staff should continue attempting to communicate with the pupil throughout the incident, and should make it clear that physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary. A calm and measured approach to a situation is needed and adults should never give the impression that they have lost their temper, or are acting out of anger or frustration, or to punish the pupil.

Sometimes a member of staff should not intervene in an incident without help (unless it is an emergency). For example, when dealing with an older pupil, or a physically large pupil, or more than one pupil, or if the member of staff believes he or she may be at risk of injury. In those circumstances the member of staff should remove other pupils who might be at risk, and summon assistance from a colleague or colleagues, or where necessary phone the Police. The staff member should inform the pupil(s) that he or she has sent for help. Until assistance arrives the member of staff should continue to attempt to defuse the situation orally, and try to prevent the incident from escalating.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The school will review this behaviour policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness.

The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.