

Positive Handling Policy



“A school without walls or ceilings.”

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the vision, values and distinct Christian character of the school. At the heart of our school is Jesus’ parable of the mustard seed where our principle values are explored:

Courage Kindness Respect Forgiveness Trust Hope.

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What force is 'reasonable'?

'Reasonable force' covers a broad range of actions, used by most teachers at some point in their career, which involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.

Force is considered **reasonable** when:

- It is in proportion to the consequences it's intended to prevent
- The level and duration are the minimum necessary to achieve the desired result

Force is usually used either to **control** or **restrain** pupils.

Using force to control pupils includes:

- Passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path
- Active physical contact, such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom

Restraint is typically used in more extreme circumstances, such as when 2 pupils are fighting and refuse to separate. This might include:

- Holding a pupil back physically
- Bringing a pupil under control

Staff should try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases this may not always be possible.

Who can use reasonable force?

All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force.

It can also be used by anyone who's been put in charge of pupils temporarily by your headteacher, such as:

- Unpaid volunteers
- Parents accompanying students on a school trip

When can reasonable force be used?

Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from:

- Hurting themselves or someone else
- Damaging property
- Causing disorder

It can **never** be used as a form of punishment.

It's up to your staff's professional judgement to decide whether to physically intervene. This decision should always depend on the individual circumstances.

Situations where force can be used

You may use reasonable force to:

- Remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to leave the room
- Prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit
- Prevent a pupil leaving the classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others
- Prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or stop a fight in the playground
- Restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts
- Conduct a search for a set list of prohibited items which includes knives and weapons, if you're the headteacher or an authorised member of staff (see the list of items in guidance on [searching pupils and confiscation](#))

This list of examples isn't exhaustive.

Pupils with SEND

Reasonable force can be used on pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), but when deciding whether this is appropriate, you should know and understand the needs of the pupil concerned.

If a pupil is displaying a pattern of behaviour that means you need to use reasonable force repeatedly, consider making a plan to deal with this situation.

Do a risk assessment and work with parents to create a [behaviour plan](#) that sets out the types of physical interventions that will be used in extreme circumstances.

How to use reasonable force

- Warn the child of what you are going to do. Offer them the chance to avoid the use of force by stopping the behaviour
- Carry out the physical intervention using no more force than necessary
- Stay calm and do not react to any abusive or highly-emotional language from the pupil
- Allow the pupil to calm down, and once you feel the restraint is no longer necessary begin to release your hold on the pupil
- Discuss the behaviour that triggered the situation with the pupil
- Complete an incident report and inform parents (if necessary)

Note that certain techniques are unacceptable

The following restraint techniques present an unacceptable risk when used on children, and should **not** be used:

- The 'seated double embrace' – 2 members of staff forcing an individual into a sitting position and leaning them forward, while a third monitors breathing
- The 'double basket-hold' – holding an individual's arms across their chest
- The 'nose distraction technique' – a sharp upward jab under the nose

Consider staff training

There's no legal requirement for staff to be trained in physical restraint.

It is up to you to decide on what staff training is needed. Consider whether staff will be expected to use restrictive physical interventions in their role – if they are, then it's important that they're appropriately trained.

Your local authority may be able to help you develop or choose an appropriate training programme, so get in touch with them.

How to report incidents

Informing parents

Speak to parents about 'serious incidents' involving the use of force.

When deciding whether something is a 'serious incident', use your professional judgement and consider the:

- Pupil's behaviour and level of risk presented at the time of the incident
- Degree of force used
- Effect on the pupil or member of staff
- Child's age

It's ultimately up to you to decide whether it is appropriate to report the use of force to parents.

Internal records

There are no requirements here unless you're a boarding school, but you should consider how best to record 'serious incidents' involving the use of force.

Find out [how to record physical interventions](#).

Set out your approach in a policy

Make sure all staff are aware of their power to use reasonable force, and how to use it safely, by setting out their responsibilities in a policy or a plan. This will also make sure parents and pupils are clear on when reasonable force might be used, to reduce the likelihood of complaints.

Note that any policy on the use of reasonable force should acknowledge your legal duty to make [reasonable adjustments](#) for pupils with SEND.

Include the power to use reasonable force in your [behaviour policy](#), and see examples of specific policies on [positive handling and physical restraint](#).