

Use of Reasonable Force Policy



Policy adopted by Board of Governors: March 2019

Policy review date: March 2021

Signed: _____ (Principal)

_____ (Chair of Board of Governors)

The use of Reasonable Force to Restrain or Control Pupils

Reasonable Force may be used by the following staff at St. Mary's Primary School:

- Principal & Teaching Staff
- Non-Teaching Staff who are authorised by the Principal
- Volunteers – but only in exceptional circumstances

All non-teaching staff and volunteers must be identified and specifically authorised by the Principal to be in control or in charge of pupils.

Reasonable force may be used in the following situations:

- On school premises while authorised to have charge or control of pupils
- On authorised out of school activities

By Reasonable Force, we mean that:

- The use of any force is UNLAWFUL, unless circumstances warrant it.
- The degree of force must be in proportion to the seriousness of the behaviour.
- It may depend on the age, level of understanding, sex and any possible physical disability of the pupil.

The use of Reasonable Force may be appropriate in the following circumstances:

- In self-defence due to imminent risk of injury
- In case of a developing risk of injury or significant damage to property
 - e.g. pupil attacks teacher or other pupil
 - pupils are fighting
 - pupil causing or causing risk of, injury or damage, by accident, by rough behaviour or misuse of dangerous materials, substances or objects
 - pupil running in corridor likely to cause an accident
 - A pupil (*who could be at risk if not kept in the school*) tries to leave the school or class

NOTE:

- Reasonable Force is never a substitute for good behaviour management
- Staff should attempt to resolve all issues calmly, never giving the impression of acting out of frustration or anger or a desire to punish the pupil.
- Care should be taken when dealing with older pupils, physically large pupils or groups of pupils – if necessary try to remove other pupils who may be at risk and send for help. Tell the pupil(s) concerned that help has been sent for.

Staff should develop a range of behaviour management strategies for dealing with pupils, especially those known to be difficult/disruptive. INSET will help here, and all staff will have an opportunity to develop these strategies.

Although the need to restrain/control pupils by force is an extremely rare occurrence, the guidance given by DENI is valuable should such a situation occur

What Actions Constitute Using Reasonable Force

- Physically interposing between pupils
- Blocking a pupil's path
- Holding
- Pushing
- Pulling
- Leading a pupil by the arm
- "Shepherding" by placing a hand in the centre of back
- (In extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds

These Actions **Must Not** be used:

- Holding pupil round neck, or by collar, or in a way, which might restrict breathing
- Slapping, punching, kicking or using implement on a pupil
- Throwing any object at a pupil
- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint
- Tripping up a pupil
- Holding or pulling a pupil by hair or ear
- Holding a pupil face down face to the ground
- Touching or holding a pupil in any way, which might be construed as indecent

Some general notes

1. In extreme circumstances, everyone has the right of self-defence provided they do not use a disproportionate degree of force.
2. In an emergency, anyone can and should intervene to prevent a pupil causing personal injury to others.
3. Physical contact with pupils is unavoidable in some circumstances, for example in certain PE situations or when administering first aid. Young children and children with special educational needs may also need a degree of physical assistance.
4. Pupils experiencing distress may require comforting – teachers should exercise professional judgment as to what is appropriate in these cases.
5. Some young people, in particular those who have suffered abuse, may find any touching unwelcome. Staff should be sensitive to this.

6. No matter how well intentioned, physical contact with pupils, especially those at and approaching adolescence can be misconstrued.
7. All instances where reasonable force has been used should be formally recorded and reported to the Principal. The parent(s) of the pupil involved will also be officially notified by letter. The principal and Chairperson of the Board of Governors will review these reports at least annually, and records will be kept for at least five years after the date of occurrence.