



Policy on the Use of Reasonable Force by Staff to Control or Restrain Students

Date for renewal/updates/review	February 2025
Named person responsible for monitoring	Headteacher
Agreed by Governing Body	February 2022

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Linked Policies: Behaviour for Learning, SEND, Safeguarding, Health and Safety.

Aims

The aims of this policy are:

- To maintain safety of students, staff and visitors
- To prevent serious breaches of school discipline
- To prevent serious damage to property

Minimising the use of force

It is important that a calm environment is created within the school which minimises the risk of incidents that may require force arising. This is done by everyone abiding by the School's Behaviour Policy which is available on the School's website.

In addition, the School's Pastoral System, Restorative Justice, Counselling, Connexions Targeted Support and collaborative work with Aspire are available in order to help students address potential conflict issues and so de-escalate incidents. These are managed by the Student Support Team in the school.

Risk assessments which contain information about trigger points and ways of de-escalating situations may be put in place for certain students as the need arises. These will be written in collaboration with the parents/carers, student and any external agencies involved with copies distributed to all relevant staff and the parents/carers concerned. They are reviewed on a regular basis and contain reasonable adjustments.

What is reasonable force?

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 and for no longer than is necessary to manage the situation.

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 to 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.

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.



Staff authorised to use reasonable force

All members of school staff that have control or charge of students on the school premises, in bus queues or on authorised out of school activities have ongoing authorisation to use reasonable force in those circumstances which their professional judgement indicate it is necessary.

Site Security Officers employed to work at Sir William Ramsay School have authorisation to use reasonable force in those circumstances which their professional judgement indicate it is necessary and in-line with this policy and their company policies and procedures.

Temporary authorisation is given to non-employees who are named adults supervising students on school trips. This temporary authorisation is only valid during the hours of the trip and can only be used when a staff employee is not able to deal with the situation. The non-employee will be spoken to about this in advance by a member of the SLT.

Deciding whether to use reasonable force

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. Staff should consider the student's situation, the physical environment and the nature of the incident before using reasonable force. Staff should only use reasonable force as a last resort, once alternative approaches have not proved successful or are possible.

Staff should only use reasonable force to:

- prevent students from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- in extreme circumstances, remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so.
- prevent a student leaving the classroom where allowing the student to leave would risk their safety or the safety of others.
- prevent a student from attacking a member of staff or another student, or to stop a fight.

Staff cannot use force as a punishment - it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

If a knife or other offensive weapon is used, use is threatened or there is a possibility that such a weapon is present, then the School Office must be called who will inform senior staff. The Police will be called and the situation monitored very closely with staff and students moved to safe areas if necessary; reasonable force should only be used in this case when there is a serious risk to staff or students at that moment.

Use of force

It is important that only minimum reasonable force is used to achieve the desired result.

Where possible, reasonable force should not be used unless or until another responsible adult is present to support. Where possible, observe and call for assistance by getting a message to the School Office who can contact senior staff. If reasonable force has to be used, then a clear verbal warning should be given to the student that reasonable force may have to be used. A calm and measured approach should be taken at all times and should be appropriate to the student. Where reasonable force is deemed appropriate, the following should occur where possible before the intervention:

- Tell the student to stop their inappropriate behaviour
- Tell the student what behaviour is desired
- Tell the student that you will have to physically intervene

Any type of restraint which is likely to injure the student should only be used in extreme emergencies and there is no viable alternative.



Types of force that must not be used as these are not deemed reasonable include:

- holding a student around the neck or collar, or in any other way that restricts breathing
- slapping, punching or kicking 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
- the 'seated double embrace' which involves two members of staff forcing a person into a sitting position and leaning them forward, while a third monitors breathing
- the 'double basket-hold' which involves holding a person's arms across their chest
- the 'nose distraction technique' which involves a sharp upward jab under the nose

Other physical contact with students

It is not illegal to touch a student. There are occasions when physical contact with a student, other than reasonable force, is proper and necessary.

Examples of where touching a student might be proper or necessary include:

- when a student is being congratulated or praised through a handshake;
- to demonstrate how to use a musical instrument;
- to demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching;
- the manual handling of SEND students, particularly those using wheelchairs;
- to give first aid.

Staff training

Given the school's context, it is not necessary to provide training in restraint techniques to all staff. Individual staff may be trained in the relevant and required restraint techniques if specific student risk assessments have identified this need. The training will be recorded in the school's CPL system including any renewal dates.

Staff will be given training on diffusing situations and managing their personal safety.

Recording incidents

Where force or restraint has been used by staff then the Headteacher or the next most senior teacher must be informed straightaway. The member of staff will be asked to write a full written report on the incident using the School's Incident Form. The student(s) will also be asked to record what happened.

Reporting Incidents

Parents/carers of a serious incident involving use of reasonable force will be informed as soon as is reasonably practical and no later than 24 hours of the incident.

In deciding what is a serious incident, the following will be considered:

- the student's behaviour and level of risk presented at the time of the incident;
- the degree of reasonable force used by staff;
- the effect on the student(s) or member(s) of staff;
- whether the behaviour is part of a repeated or escalating pattern;
- whether there is a risk assessment in place for the student or other person involved;
- the student's age.

If external agencies are involved with the student and it is relevant for them to be informed, then they will be told of the incident as soon as is reasonably practical and no later than 24 hours of the incident.



Post Incident Support

Following a serious incident, there will be a review and any risk assessments written or amended where appropriate. The School Counsellor or Restorative Justice will offer support for staff and students involved to help with physical needs and the rebuilding of relationships. Occupational Health and/or the Employee Assistance Programme will be offered to staff.

Complaints and Allegations

Any complaint or allegation of misconduct made against a member of staff arising from an incident should be put in writing to the Headteacher using the school's complaints procedure.

When a complaint is made the onus is on the person making the complaint to prove that his/her allegations are true – it is not for the member of staff to show that he/she has acted reasonably. Suspension is not an automatic response when a member of staff has been accused of using excessive force.