



REASONABLE FORCE POLICY

The College does not use corporal punishment. However, there may be circumstances when a member of staff needs to use 'reasonable force' to control or to restrain a pupil.

All members of staff, including volunteers, are legally entitled to use reasonable force when necessary.

This policy is intended to clarify the rare occasions on which reasonable force may be necessary, and the procedures which should be followed.

What is reasonable force?

There is no precise legal definition of reasonable force: the term covers a broad range of actions that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.

It can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder. Its purpose is usually to control or to restrain.

- 'Control' means either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact, such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom.
- 'Restrain' means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. Restraint is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention, and to prevent violence or injury.

'Reasonable force' means using no more force than is reasonably needed:

- The use of force can only be regarded as reasonable if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it. The use of any degree of force is unlawful if the particular circumstances do not warrant the use of physical force.
- It is always unlawful to use force as a punishment. So, physical force could not be justified to prevent a pupil from committing a trivial misdemeanour, or in a situation that clearly could be resolved without force.
- The degree of force employed must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident, to the seriousness of the behaviour, or to the consequences that it is intended to prevent.
- Any force used should always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result.

- Whether it is reasonable to use force, and the degree of force that could reasonably be employed, might also depend on, amongst other factors, the age, level of understanding of the pupil, and any physical disability they may have.

When might it be appropriate to use reasonable force?

The decision on whether or not to intervene physically is at the discretion and professional judgement of the member of staff concerned, and should always depend on the individual circumstances.

The following list is not exhaustive, but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force may need to be used:

- a pupil is physically assaulting or threatening a pupil, member of staff or other person;
- pupils are fighting;
- a pupil is at risk of causing or suffering injury, damage or serious disruption (to themselves or others), for example by:
 - running in front of a moving vehicle,
 - rough play,
 - physical outbursts,
 - jumping or falling from height, or
 - misuse of equipment or dangerous materials, substances or objects;
- a pupil is or appears to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances;
- a pupil is leaving the classroom without good cause and allowing the pupil to leave would (a) risk their safety; or (b) disrupt the behaviour of others.

What might be regarded as constituting reasonable force?

Physical intervention can take a number of forms and might involve a member of staff:

- physically interposing between pupils;
- blocking a pupil's path;
- leading a pupil by the arm;

- shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back;
- in more extreme circumstances, using more restrictive holds, or pushing or pulling a pupil.

Staff should never act in a way that is likely to cause injury. When applying reasonable force, staff should not:

- hold a pupil round the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict the pupil's ability to breathe;
- slap, punch, kick a pupil
- use any implement on a pupil;
- throw an object at a pupil;
- twist or force a limb against a joint;
- trip-up a pupil;
- hold or pull a pupil by the hair or ear;
- hold a pupil face down on the ground.

Medical Centre

If a pupil or other person involved in the incident has suffered an injury that needs medical attention, they should be referred to the Medical Centre.

Recording of incidents where reasonable force has been used

Immediately following any incident where reasonable force has been used, the member of staff concerned should tell the Deputy Master Pastoral & Co-Curricular (or, in their absence, the Senior Deputy or the Assistant Head Safeguarding) and the appropriate Head of School, and then provide a written report as soon as possible afterwards. It should include the following factual information:

- the name(s) of the pupil(s) involved, 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 (eg to prevent injury to the pupil, another pupil or a member of staff);
- how the incident began and progressed (i.e. the circumstances), 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, whether this was to control or to restrain the pupil(s), how it was applied, and for how long;

- the pupil's response, and the outcome of the incident (including, for example, if the pupil was taken to the Medical Centre);
- details of any obvious or apparent injury suffered by the pupil, or any other person, and of any damage to property.

When reasonable force has been used on a pupil, parents will be informed by the Deputy Master Pastoral & Co-Curricular, the Senior Deputy, the Assistant Head Safeguarding, or the appropriate Head of School.

A record of incidents involving the use of reasonable force is kept by the Deputy Master Pastoral & Co-Curricular's.

Other physical contact with pupils

There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a pupil is proper and necessary. However, staff should avoid touching or holding a pupil in any way that might be considered indecent, and should always take the age of the pupil(s) into consideration.

Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper or necessary:

- holding the hand of a young child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking around the school;
- when comforting a distressed pupil;
- when a pupil is being congratulated or praised;
- to demonstrate how to use a musical instrument;
- to demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching;
- to give first aid.

Any member of staff who believes that their actions could be misconstrued should inform the Deputy Master Pastoral & Co-Curricular (or, in their absence, the Senior Deputy or the Assistant Head Safeguarding).

Policy Owner: Deputy Master Pastoral & Co-Curricular
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