

Reasonable Force and Physical Restraint Policy

Village Infants School



Approved by:	Governing Board	Date: Pending
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Last reviewed on:	February 2025
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1. Policy Purpose and Overview

In line with the DfE Advice on the Use of Reasonable Force all members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.

1.1 All staff receive up-to-date behaviour management training. Where deemed necessary, identified staff are advised to attend an authorised training course dealing with de-escalation and positive handling techniques in line with the school's approach to positive pupil behaviour and discipline.

1.2 In the majority of cases, de-escalation and diffusion are the appropriate methods of dealing with situations that might result in a threat to the health and safety of any individuals.

1.3 On rare occasions it may be appropriate for staff to intervene physically with or between pupils. These include:

- ● preventing a pupil behaving in a way that leads to significant damage to property;
- ● preventing a pupil leaving the classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety
- ● preventing a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground; and
- ● restraining a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

1.4 Any intervention should be a last resort and be proportionate, reasonable and necessary, and be done with the aim to reduce not provoke.

1.5 All staff have a duty of care to pupils. To take no action, where the outcome is that a pupil injures him/herself, or another, including staff, could be seen as negligence.

2. What is Reasonable Force?

2.1 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 pupils.

2.2 Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil 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.

2.3 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.

3 De escalate and Diffuse:Advice for Staff

3.1 Members of staff facing confrontational situations with pupils are reminded that the following behaviours can either reduce or inflame incidents, and that a brief moment of risk assessment may allow the time to decide on the appropriate action necessary.

- **Remain calm** – the ability to try and remain calm and appear relaxed is less likely to provoke.
- **Be aware of space** – try to be aware of the space around you and avoid stepping into another individual's personal/intimate space. Try to take a step back outside the circle of danger.
- **Pacing and chasing** – angry people often pace around in tense situations and staff should try to avoid the temptation to follow as they attempt to help them calm down. This can be counter-productive as it may trigger an animal chase response and drive the other person away. Where possible it is preferable for the staff member to stand still, speaking **calmly, clearly** and **confidently** – or even sit down.
- **Intonation** - when people are anxious or angry they tend to talk faster, higher and more loudly. In a potential crisis situation staff need to deliberately speak slower, lower and more quietly.

3.2 Practical Advice for Staff

Help Script:

- Connect by using pupil's name
- Recognise the feelings
- Tell the pupil you're there to help
- You talk and I will listen
- Give direction
- Offer opportunities to help solve any problem

Diffusing body language responses:

- Social distance
- Sideways stance, step back
- Intermittent eye contact
- Relaxed body posture
- Palms open

Calm Stance:

- Think of the value of stepping back from a situation, both physically and emotionally:
- Allows a more considered response
- Time to make a 'dynamic' risk assessment and seek assistance

- Allows other person 'take up' time to make their own choices

4. Use of physical restraint

4.1 Physical restraint should be applied as an act of care and control with the intention of reestablishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the pupil to regain self-control.

4.2 It should never take a form which could be seen as a punishment.

4.3 Staff are only authorised to use reasonable force in applying physical restraint, although there is no absolute definition of this, as what constitutes reasonable force depends upon the particular situation and the pupil to whom it is being applied.

4.4 There are some forms of physical intervention, which may involve minimal physical contact, such as blocking a pupil's path or the staff member physically interposing him or herself between the pupil and another pupil or object.

4.5 In some circumstances, direct physical contact may be necessary.

4.6 In all circumstances other methods should be used if appropriate and effective physical restraint **should be a last resort**.

When physical restraint becomes necessary:

Do	Don't
Tell the pupil what you are doing and why	Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil
Use the minimum force necessary	Attempt to reason with the pupil
Involve another member of staff if possible	Involve other pupils in the restraint
Tell the pupil what s/he must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition)	Touch or hold the pupil in sexual areas
Use simple and clear language	Twist or force limbs back against a joint
Hold limbs above a major joint if possible e.g. above the elbow	Bend fingers or pull hair
Relax your restraint in response to the pupil's compliance	Hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around the neck
	Slap, punch, kick or trip up the pupil

	Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
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5. Actions after an incident

5.1 Physical restraint often occurs in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for the staff involved and the pupil.

5.2 A member of the leadership team should be informed verbally of any incident as soon as possible and all interventions should be recorded on the school CPOMS system as soon as possible. The incident should be recorded clearly and accurately, so that in the event of any future complaint a full record is available.

5.3 The senior leadership team will take responsibility for making arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised.

5.4 An appropriate member of the teaching staff should always be involved in debriefing the pupil involved and any victims of the incident should be offered support, and as far as is reasonably practicable, the parent of the pupil should be informed on the same day.

5.5 If the behaviour is part of an ongoing pattern, it will be necessary to address the situation through the development of a behaviour plan and daily behaviour tracking, which may include an anger management programme, or other strategies agreed by the SENDCo.

5.6 Any daily behaviour tracking and behaviour plan should always be discussed and agreed with the parent. It is also helpful to consider the circumstances precipitating the incident to explore ways in which future incidents can be avoided.

5.7 As far as is reasonably possible, a member of the leadership team will contact parents as soon as possible after an incident, normally on the same day, to inform them of the actions that were taken and why, and to provide them with an opportunity to discuss it.

6. Risk Assessments

If we become aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, we will plan how to respond if the situation arises. Such planning will address:

- Management of the pupil (e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict)
- Involvement of parents to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might need to take
- Briefing of staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training or guidance)
- Identification of additional support that can be summoned if appropriate

7. Complaints

- A clear Reasonable Force and Restraint policy, adhered to by all staff and shared with parents, should help to avoid complaints from parents.
- It is unlikely to 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 and social services department under child protection procedures.
- It is our intention to inform all staff, pupils, parents and governors about these procedures and the context in which they apply.