



# Mauldeth Road Primary School

## Use of Reasonable Force Policy



## Introduction

This policy is informed by the Government's guidance relating to behaviour and discipline in schools which is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-and-discipline-in-schools>

## Key Points

- School staff have a legal power to use force and lawful use of the power will provide a defence to any related criminal prosecution or other legal action.
- Suspension will not be an automatic response when a member of staff has been accused of using excessive force.
- Senior school leaders will support their staff when they use this power.

## 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 pupils.
- 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.
- '**Reasonable in the circumstances**' means using no more force than is needed.
- As mentioned above, schools generally use force to control pupils and to restrain them. **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.
- **Restraint** means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.
- School 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 pupil.

## Who can use Reasonable Force?

- All members of the school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force.
- This power applies to any member of staff at the school.

## When can Reasonable Force be used?

- Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- In a school, force is used for two main purposes – to control pupils or to restrain them.
- 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.



- The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can and cannot be used.

#### Reasonable Force can be used to:

- remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;
- 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 to stop a fight in the playground; and
- restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

#### Staff cannot:

- use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

#### Communicating the School's Approach to the Use of Force

- The school is required by law to make this policy known to staff, parents and pupils.
- The school does not require parental consent to use force on a student.
- The school does **not** have a 'no contact' policy. There is a real risk that such a policy might place a member of staff in breach of their duty of care towards a pupil, or prevent them taking action needed to prevent a pupil causing harm.
- By taking steps to ensure that staff, pupils and parents are clear about when force might be used, the school will reduce the likelihood of complaints being made when force has been used properly.

#### Using Force

A panel of experts identified that certain restraint techniques presented an **unacceptable risk** when used on children and young people. The techniques in question are:

- 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.

**These are not acceptable uses of force.**

#### Staff Training

School will provide advice to staff periodically on how to use this power.

### Telling Parents when Force has Been Used on their Child

School will speak to parents about serious incidents involving the use of force and record them. In deciding what a serious incident is, teachers should use their professional judgement and also consider the following:

- the pupil's behaviour and level of risk presented at the time of the incident;
- the degree of force used;
- the effect on the pupil or member of staff;
- the child's age.

### What happens if a Pupil Complains when Force us Used on Them?

- All complaints about the use of force will be thoroughly, speedily and appropriately investigated.
- Where a member of staff has acted within the law – that is, they have used reasonable force in order to prevent injury, damage to property or disorder – this will provide a defence to any criminal prosecution or other civil or public law action.
- 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, as laid out in '*Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Teachers and Other Staff*' [DFE-00061-2011]. This guidance makes clear that a person must not be suspended automatically, or without careful thought.
- School will consider carefully whether the circumstances of the case warrant a person being suspended until the allegation is resolved or whether alternative arrangements are more appropriate.
- If a decision is taken to suspend a member of staff, the school will ensure that the teacher has access to a named contact who can provide support.
- Governing bodies should always consider whether a staff member has acted within the law when reaching a decision on whether or not to take disciplinary action against them.
- As employers, schools and local authorities have a duty of care towards their employees. It is important that schools provide appropriate pastoral care to any member of staff who is subject to a formal allegation following a use of force incident.

### Other Physical Contact with Pupils

It is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a pupil is proper and necessary. Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper or necessary:

- holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together 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.

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