

Bledlow Ridge School



Use of Reasonable Force Policy

Date agreed: July 2023

Review date: July 2026

Introduction

“Situations involving decisions about whether to use force can occur in any school. Both using force and deciding not to can entail significant risks for pupils and staff. Establishing a clear school policy on the use of force by staff is an important part of minimising these risks.”

DCSF, April 2010.

Definition

Section 550A of the 1996 Education Act clarified the powers of teachers and other staff to use reasonable force to prevent pupils committing a crime; causing personal injury to himself or others; or damage to property; or causing disruption. There is no legal definition of 'reasonable force'. Accordingly, it is not possible to set out definitively and comprehensively when it is reasonable to use force or the degree of force that may be used. This policy seeks to make a clear statement about the practice of physical control of pupils in our school and recognises that physical control is, at times, necessary, but only after all other strategies have been used. "Physical control should be used only to prevent a child from harming himself or others or from damaging property. Force should not be used for any other purpose, nor simply to secure compliance with staff instruction." (The Children Act 1989)

Staff at Bledlow Ridge School recognise that the use of reasonable force is only one of the last in a range of strategies available to secure pupil safety / well-being and also to maintain good order and discipline. This policy on should therefore be read in conjunction with our Behaviour and Child Protection policies.

Physical control in the context of our school

The vast majority of pupils in our school behave and respond well to the caring and stimulating environment that is provided by the staff. The school's positive approach to behaviour, as outlined in the Behaviour policy, recognises the achievements and positive behaviour of the pupils. However, it also caters for circumstances in which sanctions may need to be applied, ranging from verbal reprimands to referral to the Headteacher, depending on the seriousness of their behaviour. This policy acknowledges that there may be very rare circumstances in which physical control has to be used.

Objectives and Principles

The Headteacher and Governors have a responsibility to maintain the safety of pupils and staff. There is a responsibility to prevent serious breaches of school discipline and to prevent serious damage to property.

As all members of school staff are authorised by law to use force the school does not have a no-contact policy. We are, however, committed to the principle that force and restraint should only be used in a reasonable way and when all other means of resolving issues are deemed to be inappropriate.

Force in schools is generally used for two different purposes:

- a) To control: control can mean either passive physical contact (e.g. standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path) or active physical contact (e.g. leading a pupil by the hand or arm, or ushering a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back)
- b) To Restrain: When members of staff use "restraint" they physically prevent a pupil from continuing what they were doing after they have been told to stop. The use of restraint techniques is usually used in more extreme circumstances, such as when two pupils are involved in a fight and physical intervention is needed to separate them.

Minimising the Use of Force

At Bledlow Ridge School we aim to create a calm and orderly environment that minimises the risk of incidents arising that might require the use of force. This is done in a number of ways:

- Teaching pupils how to manage conflicts and strong feelings
- Ensuring staff are aware of de-escalation techniques to manage conflict if it does arise (Steps training completed for all staff in September 2023)
- Only using force when the risks involved in doing so are outweighed by the risks involved in not using force
- Having up to date and regularly reviewed risk assessments and positive handling plans for individual pupils

Staff Authorised to Use Force

i. Permanent Authorisation: The Governing Body and Headteacher has authorised all teachers and staff who have control or charge of pupils automatically have statutory power to use force (i.e. teachers, LSAs, MDS's).

ii. Temporary Authorisation: In some circumstances a) staff whose jobs do not normally involve supervising pupils and b) volunteers working with pupils will be authorised to be in control or charge of pupils, will have statutory power to use force.

This might include:

School trips

Off site learning activities

After school activities

The names of these staff will be recorded in the risk assessment and plans for these activities and signed off by the Headteacher.

Deciding Whether to Use Force

Staff should only use force when

- The potential consequences of not intervening are sufficiently serious to justify considering use of force
- The chances of having the desired result by other means are low
- The risks associated with not using force outweigh those of using force.

Some situations where reasonable force might be used are:

- To prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff, or another pupil, or to stop a fight between two or more pupils
- To prevent a pupil causing deliberate damage to property
- To prevent a pupil causing injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by the misuse of dangerous materials or objects
- To ensure that a pupil leaves a room where the pupil persistently refuses to follow an instruction to do so
- To prevent a pupil behaving in a way that seriously disrupts a lesson To prevent a pupil behaving in a way that seriously disrupts a school sporting event or school visits

It is unlawful to use force as a punishment and staff should not do this under any circumstances.

Staff will be kept informed about, and advised how to deal with, pupils who present particular risks to themselves. These pupils should have an individual risk assessment and individual behaviour plan that determines the likely triggers for undesirable behaviour and the effective ways to manage such pupils.

If a pupil is suspected of having a weapon or any other dangerous object and is likely to resist a search, staff should alert the office staff and call the police to deal with the situation.

Use of physical restraint

Physical restraint should be applied as an act of care and control with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the pupil to regain self-control. It should never take a form which could be a punishment. 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 situation and the pupil to whom it is being applied. However, generally, only the force necessary to stop or prevent the behaviour should be used, in accordance with the guidelines below.

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. However, in some circumstances, direct physical contact may be necessary. In all circumstances other methods should be used if appropriate or effective physical restraint should be a last resort.

Principles and procedures

The school's Behaviour Policy emphasises the school's ethos with regard to mutual care & respect, expectations and managing pupils' behaviour in general without the need to resort to physical restraint techniques. In the very rare event of physical control being necessary, the following principles should apply:

1. The child should be at risk or in danger of harming others or of seriously damaging property and/or seriously affecting the educational entitlement of other pupils. Examples would include:
 - A pupil attacking a member of staff
 - Pupils fighting
 - A pupil engaged in, or about to commit, deliberate vandalism
 - Pupils running in the corridor and thereby risking injury to themselves or others
 - A pupil trying to leave the classroom or school without permission
 - A pupil seriously disrupting a lesson and/or refusing to leave the classroom.
 - A pupil resisting or refusing to take essential prescribed medication
 - A pupil deliberately harming or threatening to harm other pupils or staff
2. Restraint should be an act of care and control, not punishment. The use of any method intended to induce pain or humiliation is unacceptable.
3. Only the minimum force necessary to prevent injury or damage should be applied and the degree of force used must be in proportion to the seriousness of the incident.
4. The child should be warned verbally that physical restraint will be used unless he/she desists.
5. To avoid any misinterpretations by anybody present, of the actions of the member of staff, he/she should clearly voice what he/she is doing and why he/she is taking that action.
6. Every effort should be made for another member of staff to be present before applying restraint - for assistance and witness.
7. As soon as it is safe, restraint should be gradually relaxed to allow the child to gain self-control.
8. A single, unsupported member of staff should not intervene in an incident without help (unless it is an emergency) if the pupil is physically larger or when more than one pupil is involved. Other pupils who might be at risk should be removed from the scene and a colleague sent for.
9. The most acceptable means of restraint is to hold the body, when essential, by the arms being held against the side of the body; restraint on the floor if this is the safest place for the pupil; restraining holds on the legs, shoulders and arms.

10. Support for the member of staff concerned will be offered by the Headteacher or Assistant Head and the incident must be reported and recorded immediately using the bound and numbered book found in the Headteacher's office. The reports will remain an internal record for the school's use in monitoring its own practice. The LA will only require access to them in the event of a child protection investigation.)

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tell the pupil what you are doing and why ● Use the minimum force necessary ● Involve another member of staff if possible ● Tell the pupil what s/he must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition) ● Use simple and clear language ● Hold limbs above a major joint if possible e.g. above the elbow ● Relax your restraint in response to the pupil's compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil ● Attempt to reason with the pupil ● Involve other pupils in the restraint ● Touch or hold the pupil in sexual areas. ● Twist or force limbs back against a joint ● Bend fingers or pull hair ● 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)

Alternative strategies

There are some situations in which the need for physical restraint is immediate and where there are no equally effective alternatives (e.g. a pupil about to run across a road). However, in many circumstances there are alternatives e.g. use of assertiveness skills such as:

- the broken record in which an instruction is repeated until the pupil complies
- use of a distracter, such as a loud whistle, to interrupt the behaviour (such as a fight) long enough for other methods of verbal control to be effective
- withdrawal of attention (audience) e.g. if an action such as damage to property is threatened
- other techniques designed to defuse the situation, such as the avoidance of confrontation, or use of humour (in these cases the incident can be dealt with later when emotions are no longer running high)
- the employment of other sanctions consistent with the School's policy on behaviour.

Staff Training

The Headteacher will ensure that all staff, as part of their induction to the school, are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the School Policy on the Use of Force.

At Bledlow RidgeSchool we will ensure the following training is in place:

- At least one member of staff will have received training by expert accredited providers in physical intervention and restraint technique. It is, however, not assumed that the named trained members of staff should be solely responsible for dealing with all incidents where physical intervention or restraint is required.

- All staff are made aware of the policy on the use of force and restraint with a particular focus on when, where and how force and restraint may reasonably be used and the way such incidents should be recorded.
- All staff have had 'Steps' training in September 2023 to support with de escalation strategies

Recording Incidents

Any use of force or restraint must be recorded on CURA. The information on Appendix 1 will be added to CURA and 'Restraint' will be 'tagged'. CURA will be updated as soon as practicable after the incident and the Headteacher or designated person will be informed ASAP (at the end of the day at the latest).

Reporting Incidents

The school acknowledges it has a duty to report to parents if there has been a significant incident where a member of staff has used force or restraint on a pupil.

Once an incident is recorded and passed to the Headteacher or designated person a decision will be made as to whether the incident is deemed as significant within 1 working day.

If the use of force or restraint is seen to have been significant it must be reported to parents by either the Headteacher or designated person (names of staff responsible for this communication). Ideally this will be by telephone and will occur as soon as possible after the incident. Families should be given access to a copy of this policy.

If there is any concern that reporting the incident could lead to the child being put at risk of harm, the incident should be passed immediately to the designated teacher for Child Protection who should liaise with the Local Authority and/or Social Services.

Post Incident Support

If there is any injury to the child as a result of the use of restraint or force first aid and medical assistance should be sought immediately. Staff and pupils should be given appropriate emotional support.

Any member of staff who has been assaulted may decide, usually after a discussion with the Headteacher, to report the incident to the police or seek advice from their professional association.

We will ensure that there is clear follow up and use of sanctions, in line with the behaviour policy, to the poor behaviour of the pupil concerned.

We will work to help the pupil and staff involved to rebuild a productive working relationship so, where appropriate, they may resume professional contact.

Complaints and Allegations

If a specific allegation is made against a member of staff the school will follow the guidance set out in Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education. Other complaints should be dealt with according to the school complaints procedure.

Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher will report to the Governing Body if it has been necessary for a member of staff to use force. This policy will be reviewed alongside the School Behaviour Policy

Appendix 1

When might it be appropriate to use reasonable force?

Examples of situations that may require restraint are when:

- A pupil attacks a member of staff, or another pupil
- Pupils fighting
- A pupil is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials, substances or objects
- A pupil is running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way in which he/she might have or cause an accident likely to injure her/himself or others
- A pupil absconding from a class or trying to leave school (NB this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school)
- A pupil persistently refuses to obey an order to leave an area
- A pupil behaves in such a way that seriously disrupts a lesson.

Appendix 1

Name	
Class	
Date, time, location of incident	
Name of staff involved	
Details of other student involved	
Description of incident by staff involved, including any attempts to de escalate and warnings given that force might be used	
Reason for using force and description of forced used	
Any injury suffered by staff or student and any firsts aid/ medical attention required	

Follow up, including post incident support	
When and how were parents informed about the incident and any views that have expressed	
Report completed by (name and role)	
Date	