

BLEDLow RIDGE SCHOOL

PHYSICAL CONTROL POLICY

Date of Last Review: July 2020

Date of next Review: July 2023

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)

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 & Discipline 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.

Aims

- To maintain a safe and secure learning environment.
- To protect the dignity and safety of both pupils and staff.
- To promote a shared understanding that although always a last resort, physical control is still an option that authorised individuals may have to take.
- To develop a system in which restraint is seen as a positive form of control.

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. Our policy on restraint should therefore be read in conjunction with our Behaviour and Child Protection policies.

Why use restraint?

Physical restraint should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a child's action or perhaps by removing a physical object, which could be used to harm him / herself or others. It is only likely to be needed if a child appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and behaviour.

It is not possible to define every circumstance in which physical restraint would be necessary or appropriate and staff should exercise their own judgement in situations which arise within the above categories. Staff should always act within the School's policy on behaviour and discipline, particularly in dealing with disruptive behaviour.

Staff should be aware that when they oversee children during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are acting in loco parentis and should, therefore, take reasonable action to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. Failure to physically restrain a pupil who is subsequently injured or injures another, could, in certain circumstances, lead to an accusation of negligence. At the same time staff are not expected to place themselves in situations where they are likely to suffer injury because of their intervention.

Alternative strategies

There are some situations in which the need for physical restraint is immediate and where there are no equally effective alternatives (eg is 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.

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 & 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
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)

TRAINING

Training on control and restraint of pupils will be given to all nominated staff as part of their ongoing professional development. This will reflect the positive ethos of the school as detailed in the school's stated aims, its Behaviour and Discipline policy and its Anti-Bullying policy. The nature of the training is 'Team Teach'.

This policy is based on guidance given by the LA Advisory Service in 1999, concerning the physical control of pupils in Buckinghamshire schools, with which our school will seek to fully comply.

Actions after an incident

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. A member of the leadership team should be informed of any incident as soon as possible and will take responsibility for making arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised. 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 their parents informed.

If the behaviour is part of an ongoing pattern it may be necessary to address the situation through the development of a behavioural IEP, which may include an anger management programme, or other strategies agreed by the SENCO. It is also helpful to consider the circumstances precipitating the incident to explore ways in which future incidents can be avoided.

All incidents should be recorded immediately. All sections of this report should be completed so that in the event of any future complaint a full record is available. 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.

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, holds to be used if necessary)
- 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

Complaints

A clear 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.

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.