

POLICY ON THE USE OF FORCE TO CONTROL OR RESTRAIN PUPILS

Reviewed August 2014.

This policy was based on DCSF document *Non-statutory Guidance for Schools in England*, 2 November 2007 and reviewed in light of DfE *Use of Reasonable Force*, July 2013.

Use of force to control or restrain pupils at Sevenoaks School is very rarely necessary. Pupils are well behaved and there is a good relationship between pupils and between pupils and staff.

Objective

To enable all staff who have control or charge of pupils to use such force as is reasonable in all the circumstances to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- Injuring themselves or others;
- Committing a serious breach of good order and school discipline whether that behaviour occurs in a classroom during a teaching session or elsewhere.
- Causing serious damage to property (including a pupil's own property);

The provision applies when on the school premises (including visiting pupils) and when on an authorised activity outside of the school. Pupils, including Prefects, do not have the right to use reasonable force for the purpose of controlling or restraining pupils.

Deciding whether to use 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.

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force. This power applies to any member of staff at the school. It can also apply to people whom the head teacher has temporarily put in charge of pupils such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying students on a school organised visit.

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.

It cannot be used as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

Reasonable force can also be used to search pupils without consent for the following “prohibited items”:

- knives and weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- stolen items
- tobacco and cigarette papers
- fireworks
- pornographic images
- any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property

Force cannot be used to search for items banned under the school rules.

Using force

Where possible a verbal warning should be given. As far as possible force should not be used unless another responsible adult is present to support or help.

Recording Incidents

The Pastoral Deputy Head will retain a record of all such occasions (except minor or trivial incidents). This may help prevent any misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the incident, or should be helpful should there be a complaint. The member of staff concerned should tell the Pastoral Deputy Head, or another senior member of staff if she is not available, and provide a written report on the form available from the Pastoral Deputy Head, as soon as possible afterwards.

Staff may find it helpful to seek advice from a senior colleague or a representative of their professional association when compiling a report. They should also keep a copy of the report.

The Pastoral Deputy Head, or member of staff to whom the incident is reported, will need to consider whether the parents of the child concerned should be contacted immediately or at the end of the school day, and whether parents should be told orally or in writing.

Complaints

Effective communication with parents whose child has been involved in a physical restraint incident, and close adherence to this policy should help to avoid complaints from parents. It may not necessarily prevent a complaint, however, and a dispute about the use of force by a member of staff may lead to an investigation, either internally or in more serious cases by the Police and Social Services Department under child-protection procedures.

Physical Contact with Pupils in Other Circumstances

There are occasions when physical contact with a pupil may be proper or necessary. Some physical contact may be necessary to demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons, sports coaching, Music or CDT, or if a member of staff has to give first aid. Touching may also be appropriate where a pupil is in distress and needs comforting. Teachers will use their own professional judgement when they feel a pupil needs this kind of support. There may be some children for whom touching is particularly unwelcome.

The policy is to be reviewed annually, or sooner if an incident arises.

USE OF FORCE TO CONTROL OR RESTRAIN PUPILS: INCIDENT RECORD

Details of pupil or pupils on whom force was used by a member of staff (name and tutor):	Names of staff involved (state whether directly or as witnesses):
Date, time and location of incident:	
Details of other pupils involved (state whether directly or as witnesses), including whether any of the pupils involved were vulnerable for SEN, disability, medical, social or other reasons:	
Description of incident by the staff involved, including any attempts to de-escalate the situation and warnings given that force might be used:	
Reasons for using force and description of force used:	
Details of any injury suffered by staff or pupils and any first aid and/or medical attention required:	
Reasons for making a record of the incident:	
Follow-up, including post-incident support and any disciplinary action against pupils:	
Details of when and how those with parental responsibility were informed about the incident and any views they expressed:	
Has any complaint been lodged? (Details should not be recorded here)	
Report compiled by: Name and role: Signature: Date:	Report countersigned by: Name and role: Signature: Date: