

Starcross Primary School & Preschool

Use of Reasonable Force Policy



Approved by: The Governors of Starcross Primary School **Date:** November 2020

POLICY HISTORY/AMENDMENT RECORD

DATE	AMENDED BY	NATURE OF CHANGE	NEXT REVIEW
Nov 2020	Headteacher/LGB	Reviewed and updated in line with policy cycle	Nov 2023
March 2023	Headteacher/LGB	Updated wording around staff authorised to use reasonable force.	Feb 2026

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1 Introduction

Guidance concerning the use of reasonable force to restrain pupils can be found in section 550(A) of the Education Act 1996, as inserted by section 4 of the Education Act 1997. This provision was extended to include all schools by section 131 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Use of Reasonable Force (July 2013) DfE Guidance document for head teachers, staff and governing bodies.

2 Other Policies

Other policies to be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Health & Safety
- Safeguarding (Child Protection)
- Special Educational Needs

3 Rationale

- 3.1 The Education Act 1996 forbids corporal punishment, but allows all teachers to use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from:
 - committing a criminal offence
 - injuring themselves or others
 - damaging property
 - acting in a way that is counter to maintaining good order and discipline at the school
- 3.2 This power may be used where the pupil (including pupils from other schools) is on school premises or elsewhere in the lawful control or in the charge of a member of staff.
- 3.3 There is no legal definition of when it is reasonable to use force. That will always depend on the precise circumstances of individual cases. To be judged lawful, the force used would need to be in proportion to the consequences it is intended to prevent. The degree of force used should always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result.
- 3.4 The Act does not cover more extreme situations such as action in self-defence or in an emergency, when it might be reasonable for someone to use a degree of force.

4 What is reasonable force?

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
- 4.4 As mentioned above, schools generally only 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.

- 4.5 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.

5 Minimising the need to use reasonable force

- 5.1 Staff should always try to deal with the situation using other agreed strategies to calm a situation before considering using force.
- 5.2 Although we recognise that preventative measures will not always work, there are numerous steps that will be taken in order to help reduce the likelihood of situations arising where the power to use force may need to be exercised. We endeavor to:
- Create a calm, orderly and supportive environment that minimises the risk of violence of any kind
 - Develop effective relationships between pupils and staff that are central to good order
 - Adopt a whole-school approach to developing social and emotional skills
 - Take a structured approach to staff development that helps staff to develop the skills of positive behaviour management; managing conflict and also support each other during and after an incident
 - Recognise that challenging behaviours are often foreseeable
 - Effectively manage individual incidents while understanding the importance of communicating calmly with the pupil, using non-threatening verbal body language and ensuring that the student can see a way out of a situation. For example, pupils should always be given an option of going to a quiet space with the staff member away from bystanders and other students, so that the staff member can listen to concerns; or being joined by a particular member of staff well known to the pupil
 - Wherever practical, warning a pupil that force may have to be used before using force.

6 Staff authorised to use reasonable force

The staff to which this power applies are defined in Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. These are:

- Members of SLT who have had reasonable force training (PIPS)
- Members of the teaching and support staff team who have had PIPS training.

7 When can reasonable force be used?

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

- 7.3 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. This must only be in a last case scenario.
- 7.4 The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can and cannot be used.
- 7.5 Schools can use reasonable force to:
- 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.
- 7.6 In these examples use of force would be reasonable (and therefore lawful) if it was clear that the behaviour was sufficiently dangerous or disruptive to warrant physical intervention of the degree applied and could not be realistically dealt with by any other means.
- 7.7 Schools cannot:
- use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

8 Deciding whether to use reasonable force

- 8.1 Staff should only use force when the risk of not using force significantly outweighs those of using force. Then the judgement whether to use force and what force to use should always depend on the circumstances of each case. Students with SEN and/or disabilities should be handled according to information about the individual student concerned (see section on 'Staff Training').
- 8.2 Decisions on whether the precise circumstances of an incident justify the use of significant force must be reasonable. Typically, such decisions have to be made quickly, with little time for reflection. Nevertheless, staff need to make the clearest possible judgements about:
- The seriousness of the incident, assessed by the effect of the injury, damage or disorder which is likely to result if force is not used.
 - The greater the potential for injury, damage or serious disorder, the more likely it is that using force may be justified,
 - The chances of achieving the desired result by other means. The lower the probability of achieving the desired result by other means the more likely it is that using force can be justified.
 - The relative risks associated with the physical intervention compared to the risks of using other strategies. The smaller the risks associated with physical intervention compared with other strategies, the more likely it is that using force can be justified.

9 Using reasonable force

- 9.1 Staff, as far as possible, should not use force unless or until another responsible adult is present to support, observe and call for assistance. Then staff should always only use the minimum amount of force to achieve the desired effect.
- 9.2 Before using reasonable force staff should, wherever practical, tell the pupil to stop

the unwanted or unsafe behaviour and communicate in a calm measured manner throughout the incident. Staff should not give the impression of acting out of anger or frustration, or to punish a pupil, and should make it clear that physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary.

- 9.3 Types of reasonable force used could include:
- Passive physical contact resulting from standing between students or staff and students
 - Active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm or hand or ushering a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back
 - In more extreme circumstances, using appropriate restrictive holds
- 9.4 Where there is a high and immediate risk of death or of serious injury, any member of staff would be justified in taking necessary action (consistent with the principle of seeking to use the minimum force required to achieve the desired result). Such situations could include preventing a pupil running off the pavement onto a busy road or preventing a pupil hitting someone with a dangerous object such as a glass bottle or hammer.
- 9.5 Staff should always make every effort to avoid acting in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury. However, in the most extreme circumstances it may not always be possible to avoid injuring a pupil.
- 9.6 Staff should always avoid touching or restraining a pupil in a way that could be interpreted as sexually inappropriate.

10 Staff Training

- 10.1 Staff training will occur in accordance with continuous professional development.
- 10.2 The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDco) will also support teachers to create behavior care plans where it is known that force is more likely to be necessary to restrain a particular pupil, such as a pupil whose SEN and/or disability is associated with extreme behaviour. Staff will be notified about procedures in place.
- 10.3 Some key members of pastoral staff will be trained and regularly updated in the use of positive handling. Usually the staff are those most likely to find themselves in a situation (SLT) that may require the use of reasonable force and are therefore trained to do this correctly and in a lawful manner.

11 Recording/reporting Incidents

- 11.1 Starcross Primary School will keep records of every incident in which force has been used, in accordance with this policy and procedures and safeguarding requirements. The purpose of recording is to ensure policy guidelines are followed, to inform parents and carers, to inform improvement processes, to prevent misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the incident and to provide a record for any future enquiry.
- 11.2 Members of the Senior Leadership Team can be called if a situation arises where reasonable force may be needed.

- 11.3 Use of Reasonable Force should be recorded by all members of staff involved in an incident on CPOMS and give a detailed report of what occurred and what restraint was used. This should include the name of the students involved, where the incident took place, name of any staff present, how the incident began and progressed, what was said, steps taken to defuse or calm the situation, degree of force used and how it was applied. Reasonable force is recorded as the outcome.
- 11.4 Parents and carers to be informed on the same day by: A member of the Senior Leadership Team