



# Use of Reasonable Force Policy

<b>Formally adopted by the Governing Body of All Angels' Federation</b>	
<b>On:</b>	<b>October 2021</b>
<b>Chair of Governors:</b>	<b>Rosemary Games</b>
<b>Review:</b>	<b>October 2023</b>

At All Angels' Federation we strive to create an environment in which both children and adults feel happy, safe, secure and valued. We aim to ensure a whole school approach to behaviour which is known and understood by all staff, children, parents and outside agencies (please refer to our Relationships and Behaviour Policy). The use of force upon any pupil by a member of staff is a serious matter, and the DFE guidance in this policy sets out the circumstances under which it may be used. The law is clear and the Governing Body has a responsibility to all concerned, to support any member of staff who uses reasonable force in accordance with the law, and with this policy.

### AIMS OF THE POLICY

The aims of this Reasonable Force Policy are to:

- Provide clarification on the use of reasonable force in school;
- To enable staff to feel more informed and confident about the use of reasonable force when they believe it to be necessary;
- To make clear the responsibilities of headteachers, senior staff and governing bodies in respect of this power;
- This policy is drawn from advice contained in the document 'Use of Reasonable Force – Advice for Head Teachers, staff and governing bodies' issued 2013 by the Department for Education (DFE);
- This policy is drawn from the DFE Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2021.

### KEY POINTS

1. School staff have a legal power to use force and lawful use of this power will provide a defence to any related criminal prosecution or other legal action;
2. Suspension should not be an automatic response when a member of staff has been accused of using excessive force;
3. Senior school leaders should support their staff when they use this power.
4. The school and staff will make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and children with special educational needs (SEN) depending upon the circumstances.
5. Schools do not require parental consent to use force on a student.
6. All schools should **not** have a 'no contact' policy. This is to ensure that members of staff will not breach their duty of care towards a pupil and will take action needed to prevent a pupil causing harm.

### What is reasonable force?

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.
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.
3. 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
4. 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.
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.

6. 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 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.

### **Schools can use reasonable force 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.

### **Schools cannot:**

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

### **Power to search pupils without consent**

In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described above, headteachers and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search 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.

Separate guidance is available on the power to search without consent – see the ‘Further sources of information’ (appendix 2).

### **Using force**

- A panel of experts identified that certain restraint techniques presented an **unacceptable** risk when used on children and young people. The techniques which **MUST NOT** be used 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; and
- the ‘nose distraction technique’ which involves a sharp upward jab under the nose.

### **Staff training**

The headteacher will consider whether members of staff require any additional training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities and will consider the needs of the pupils when doing so.

**However, training is not a requirement in order for staff to use reasonable force.**

### **Telling parents when force has been used on their child**

- The school will inform parents about serious incidents involving the use of force and the staff members involved will record such serious incidents on our incident report form. The DfE states that it is up to schools to decide whether it is appropriate to report the use of force to parents.
- In deciding what is a serious incident, teachers should use their professional judgement and consider the:
  - pupil’s behaviour and level of risk presented at the time of the incident;
  - degree of force used;
  - effect on the pupil or member of staff; and
  - the child’s age.

### **What happens if a pupil complains when force is used on them?**

- All complaints about the use of force should 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 must not be an automatic response when a member of staff has been accused of using excessive force. Schools should refer to the “[Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Teachers and Other Staff](#)” guidance where an allegation of using excessive force is made against a teacher. This guidance makes clear that a person must not be suspended automatically, or without careful thought.
- Schools must 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 teacher, the school should ensure that the teacher has access to a named contact who can provide support.
- Governing bodies should always consider whether a teacher has acted within the law when reaching a decision on whether or not to take disciplinary action against the teacher.
- 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.

### **What about 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; and
  - To give first aid.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

DfE guidance provides a list of frequently asked questions (appendix 1).

### **Appendix 1: Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q: I'm worried that if I use force a pupil or parent could make a complaint against me. Am I protected?**

**A:** Yes, if you have acted lawfully. If the force used is reasonable all staff will have a robust defence against any accusations.

**Q: How do I know whether using a physical intervention is 'reasonable'?**

**A:** The decision on whether to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the teacher concerned. Whether the force used is reasonable will always depend on the particular circumstances of the case. The use of force is reasonable if it is proportionate to the consequences it is intended to prevent. This means the degree of force used should be no more than is needed to achieve the desired result. School staff should expect the full backing of their senior leadership team when they have used force.

**Q: What about school trips?**

**A:** The power may be used where the member of staff is lawfully in charge of the pupils, and this includes while on school trips.

**Q: Can force be used on pupils with SEN or disabilities?**

**A:** Yes, but the judgement on whether to use force should not only depend on the circumstances of the case but also on information and understanding of the needs of the pupil concerned.

**Q: I'm a female teacher with a Year 10 class - there's no way I'd want to restrain or try to control my pupils. Am I expected to do so?**

**A:** There is a power, not a duty, to use force so members of staff have discretion as to whether or not to use it. However, teachers and other school staff have a duty of care towards their pupils and it might be argued that failing to take action (including a failure to use reasonable force) may in some circumstances breach that duty.

**Q: Are there any circumstances in which a teacher can use physical force to punish a pupil?**

**A:** No. It is always unlawful to use force as a punishment. This is because it would fall within the definition of corporal punishment, which is illegal.

## **Appendix 2: Further sources of information**

### **Other departmental advice and guidance you may be interested in**

- [Guidance on the Use of Restrictive Physical Interventions for Staff Working with Children and Adults who display Extreme Behaviour in Association with Learning Disability and/or Autistic Spectrum Disorders \(2002\)](#)
- [Guidance on the Use of Restrictive Physical Interventions for Pupils with Severe Behavioural Difficulties \(2003\)](#)
- [Screening, searching and confiscation – advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies.](#)

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### **Associated resources (external links)**

- [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 \(PACE\) Code G: Revised Code of Practice for the Statutory Power of Arrest by Police Officers](#)



Department  
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