



The Use of Force to Control or Restrain Pupils

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POLICY ON THE USE OF FORCE TO CONTROL OR RESTRAIN PUPILS

INTRODUCTION

All schools are required to have a policy on the use of force to control or restrain pupils. Below is our policy that outlines the school's views on the use of force and control to restrain pupils.

THE LEGISLATION

- Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 clarifies the powers of teachers, and other staff who have lawful control or charge of pupils, to use reasonable force to prevent pupils causing personal injury or damage to property; committing a crime or causing serious disruption. (Para. 9)
- Section 550A does not in any way authorise the use of corporal punishment with pupils in maintained schools. The law forbids a teacher to use any degree of physical contact which is deliberately intended to punish a pupil or which is primarily intended to cause pain, injury or humiliation. That ban applies in all circumstances and has done so since 1987. (Para. 2)

LA STATEMENT OF INTENT

West Sussex LA recognises that the welfare of the child is paramount and the right of every pupil to be protected from harm and seeks to protect all pupils from any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or unlawful.

However, it is also recognised that on occasions and as a last resort, situations may arise where, in order to ensure the welfare and protection of children or other adults, staff may need to use physical restraint.

Staff using reasonable and appropriate physical force, in line with this guidance, will have the support of the LA.

OUTLINE

In relation to physical control or restraint of pupils this policy sets out:

- 1) Staff authorised to use control or restraint in line with this guidance.
- 2) What is 'reasonable' force in terms of:
 - a) the circumstances where it may be appropriate; and
 - b) the degree and type of force used.
- 3) The procedures which should be followed when physical restraint is used to control or restrain pupils.

1) STAFF AUTHORISATION

- When a teacher, or other authorised person, is on the school premises or when he/she has lawful control or charge of the pupil concerned elsewhere e.g. on a field trip or authorised out of school activity.
- All teachers at a school to use reasonable force to control or restrain pupils.
- 'Other' members of staff who have control or charge of pupils should follow the guidance, which applies to teachers if they are specifically authorised to do so by the Headteacher.
- It is the Headteacher's responsibility to ensure that members of staff are aware of, and properly understand what the authorisation entails and that they receive appropriate guidance and training.
- If, after careful consideration, the Headteacher wishes to authorise members of staff other than teachers to use the physical restraint guidance the following list are examples of staff that may be included:
 - i. Classroom Assistants
 - ii. Special Support Assistants
 - iii. Midday Supervisors
- If the Headteacher has decided that he/she wishes to authorise a non-teaching member of staff and has determined that the member of staff is willing, he/she (or a member of the SMT) should ensure that the member of staff receives guidance on behaviour management strategies and appropriate training which can be accessed through the County INSET programme. Specific training on the restraint of pupils may be obtained through approved sources.
- The Headteacher and authorised member of staff should then complete the details on the 'Register of Non-Teaching Staff Authorised to Control or Restrain Pupils'.

2) WHAT IS REASONABLE FORCE?

There is no legal definition of 'reasonable force'. The expectation is that the force used in restraining a pupil/young person should be both **appropriate to the circumstances** and **reasonable in degree**.

Things to consider...

"the use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the **circumstances of the particular incident warrant it**. The use of any degree of force is unlawful if the particular circumstances do not warrant the use of physical force. Therefore physical force could not be justified to prevent a pupil from committing a trivial misdemeanour or in a situation that clearly could be resolved without force;"

and:

"the **degree of force employed must be in proportion** to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or the consequences it is intended to prevent. Any force used should always be the **minimum** needed to achieve the desired result."

A) Circumstances where physical restraint may be appropriate.

Everyone has the right to defend him or herself against an attack, providing they do not use disproportionate force, or to act in an emergency to prevent injury to a pupil or by a pupil to someone else. Teachers and authorised staff may also intervene in less extreme situations.

Below we have identified three broad categories where, **as a last resort**, reasonable force might be 'appropriate or necessary to control or restrain a pupil'

- i) where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury;
- ii) where there is a developing risk of injury, or significant damage to property; and
- iii) where a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline

(Particular caution should be exercised in these circumstances – see below).

- a pupil attacks a member of staff or another pupil;
- pupils are fighting and the teacher feels they can intervene without placing themselves at risk;
- a pupil is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play or by misuse of dangerous materials or objects;
- a pupil is running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way that may cause an accident likely to injure him or herself or others;
- a pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave school (N.B. this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school);
- a pupil is on the verge of committing deliberate damage or vandalism to property (N.B. staff members should only intervene where they feel it is safe to do so. Personal safety is always more important than property).
- a pupil persistently refuses an order to leave a classroom;
- a pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson.

However, members of staff should be particularly cautious about the use of force in non-urgent circumstances like these. Teachers should always exhaust all other appropriate behaviour management strategies before ever considering using force.

In situations where there is no direct risk to people or property and the key issue is establishing good order, any action which could exacerbate the situation needs to be avoided. The possible consequences of intervening physically, including the risk of increasing disruption or provoking attack, need to be very carefully evaluated.

- Other than in emergencies, members of staff are not expected to attempt to restrain a child/young person if they may put themselves at risk.

B) What is a 'reasonable' degree/type of force?

Special needs, which render an individual child physically more vulnerable, should obviously be taken into account as should the age, understanding and sex of the pupil.

The intervention can take several forms but the force used should always be the minimum necessary in the circumstances.

- Physically interposing between pupils
- Blocking a pupil's path
- Pushing
- Pulling
- Leading a pupil by the hand
- Shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back
- Holding, which is specifically intended to avoid causing injury to the pupil or others in the vicinity
- (in extreme circumstances) Using more restrictive holds **(only where specific training has been received)**
- In exceptional circumstances, where there is immediate risk of injury, a member of staff may need to take any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of 'reasonable force'. Examples of this are; to prevent a young pupil running off a pavement onto a busy road, or to prevent a pupil hitting someone, or throwing something or striking someone with a dangerous object.

The following actions are considered '**unacceptable**' by the LA (as they might reasonably be expected to lead to injury) include:

- Holding a pupil round the neck, or by the collar, or in any way that might restrict the pupil's ability to breathe;
- Slapping, punching or kicking a pupil;
- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint (e.g. forcing a child/young person's arm up his/her back);
- Tripping a pupil;
- Holding or pulling a pupil by the hair or ear;
- Shaking a pupil;
- Tying up or binding a pupil;
- Lifting a child/young person off the floor as a means of control;
- Jabbing a child/young person with a finger or implement;
- Exerting excessive pressure on any part of a child/young person's body

- Holding a pupil face down on the ground

Staff should always avoid touching or holding a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent.

3) PROCEDURE

The school's policy regarding physical restraint has been agreed with the governing body and the staff and is available to parents for information.

Although the school makes clear through this policy the procedures which should be followed, it is vital that staff exercise sound judgements and act with discretion in reacting to a particular set of circumstances.

BEFORE INTERVENING

In many instances, particularly where a child has serious and/or complex individual needs, parents will be involved in establishing programmes of behaviour modification with the school. This includes addressing:

- That parents are clear about the circumstances and type of physical intervention that maybe necessary
- That briefings for staff ensure they are aware of what action they should be taking
- The arrangements for staff needing to summon additional support; and
- The need to seek medical advice if dealing with pupils who have specific health considerations.

In any school, if a child or young person is likely to commit a crime, cause injury, damage or serious disruption, a member of staff may decide that physical intervention is necessary as a last resort, or, in an emergency.

Before using force to control or restrain he/she should...

- (except in emergencies) try to deal with the situation through other behaviour management strategies;
- (except in emergencies) consider whether they will place themselves at risk of injury by intervening, for example when dealing with older, larger pupils. Where they judge this to be the case teachers should remove other pupils who might be at risk and summon assistance from colleagues, or where necessary the police;
- tell the child to stop and warn the child of the consequences of his/her behaviour;
- if at all possible summon additional staff support and tell the child this has been done. This has the dual purpose of reducing the risk to the member of staff and providing a witness should the situation develop. Until assistance arrives continue to attempt to defuse the situation orally.

WHILST INTERVENING

The member of staff must:

- employ minimum force for the minimum period necessary to restrain the pupil;
- keep talking to the pupil, making it clear to him/her that the physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary;
- avoid threatening or committing any act of punitive violence;
- keep his/her temper under control;
- have regard to others in the vicinity.

AFTER INTERVENING

It is important that there is a detailed, contemporaneous, written report of any occasion (except minor or trivial incidents) that force is used. Unless forms are completed for every incident, decisions as to whether an incident is minor or trivial will therefore be a matter of judgement. The following procedure attempts to balance the protection of pupils and staff on one hand and keeping bureaucracy to reasonable levels on the other.

1. Report the necessity of intervention to a senior manager.
2. A brief, dated entry should be made of all reports in a school 'incidents log'.
3. If the senior manager judges it is necessary a 'Use of Physical Restraint Report Form' (see attached) should also be completed (N.B. These are for internal use but the LA, police and social services would have access to the report form if investigating a complaint).
4. **If the incident results in injury an 'Accident/Incident Reporting Form-HSW3' must be completed.** This can be instead of, or in addition to, the 'Use of Physical Restraint' form.

The management of the school will:

- > Investigate incidents (not minor or trivial) and evaluate them in the light of the school's risk assessment procedures, disseminating any conclusions reached;
- > Initiate appropriate follow-up with the child/young person involved and others present if appropriate;
- > Notify parents/carers of the action taken and initiate appropriate follow-up.
- > Offer support, as appropriate to staff involved.

Complaints/Allegations

Involving parents when an incident occurs with their child, and adherence to the school's policy about physical contact with pupils, should help to avoid complaints from parents. Clearly it will not prevent all complaints 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.

Training

Behaviour management courses are available through West Sussex Inset provision and can be accessed in the normal way. Courses in the avoidance and diffusion of aggression are also available from the Health and Safety group in PSU (Personnel Services Unit).

Related Information

- The LA leaflet 'Guidance for School Staff on Relationships with Children and Young People' provides a code of conduct regarding the wider issues of physical contact and relationships with pupils. Copies of this are available from the Headteacher.
- DfEE Circular 8/94 'Pupil Behaviour and Discipline' is still current.
- The Education Act 1996 outlines and supports what has been identified in this policy.

Use of Physical Restraint Report Form - _____ School
(The staff member(s) involved in using restraint should complete Part A. Reports are not required for 'minor or trivial incidents'.)

PART A

Incident date: _____ time: _____ location: _____

Name of the staff member(s) involved: _____

Signature(s) _____ Date _____

Name(s) of the pupil(s) involved: _____

Name(s) of any witnesses: (indicate if pupil(s) or staff) _____

Reason that force was judged necessary (e.g. to prevent injury to another pupil) _____

Details of how the incident progressed (include details of pupil's behaviour, what was said by all parties, the steps taken to defuse the situation-the type and degree of force used and for how long)

Outcome of the incident: (including pupil response) _____

Details of any injuries to any parties/damage to property: _____

NB:Physical intervention resulting in injury will require the completion of an 'Accident Incident Reporting Form-HSW3'.

PART B(e.g. external agencies contacted, discussion with parents)

Action taken by Headteacher (SMT) if appropriate:

(Staff may seek advice from a senior colleague or a representative of their professional association when compiling a report.) This form is for retention by the school. A copy can be retained by the member(s) of staff involved.