



Restraint Policy

This policy applies to all pupils and staff of Abbot's Hill, including EYFS.

1. Introduction

1.1 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.

1.2 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.

1.3 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.

1.4 Staff, other than teachers and volunteer helpers, are also able to use force if necessary, provided they have been authorised by the Headmistress to have control or charge of pupils. People with such authorisation might include teaching assistants, specialist support assistants, people accompanying pupils on visits, etc.

2. What is 'reasonable force'?

2.1 There is no legal definition of 'reasonable force' so it is not possible to set out comprehensively when it is reasonable to use force, or the degree of force that may reasonably be used. It will always depend on all the circumstances of the case.

2.2 There are three relevant considerations:

2.2.1 The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it; 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.

2.2.2 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.

2.2.3 In deciding teachers should use their professional judgement and consider the:

- a. Pupil's behaviour and level of risk presented at the time of the incident
- b. Degree of force used
- c. Effect on the pupil or member of staff, and
- d. The child's age

2.3 Whether it is reasonable to use force, and the degree of force that could reasonably be employed, might also depend on the age and understanding of the pupil, and the school's duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and children with special educational needs.

2.4 There are a wide variety of situations where the need for the use of reasonable force may arise. For example, where;

- A pupil attacked a member of staff, or another pupil
- Pupils are fighting
- A pupil is vandalising property
- A pupil is causing, or at risk of causing, injury, harm or damage, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials or objects to themselves or others.
- A pupil is running in a corridor or stairway and might have, or cause, an accident
- A pupil absconds from a class, or tries to leave school – but 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 a classroom
- A pupil seriously disrupts a lesson

2.5 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.

3. Avoid physical intervention wherever possible

3.1 As a general rule, staff should always try to avoid physical intervention and the use of force – particularly where the risk is not urgent.

3.2 Staff are encouraged to use strategies other than force to diffuse difficult situations:

- Tell pupils to stop the inappropriate behaviour
- Try to calm the situation

3.3 Physical intervention can increase disruption or actually provoke attack.

- If force is necessary, the teacher should continue trying to communicate with the pupil throughout the incident, making clear that physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as it is no longer necessary.
- It is crucial that the teacher take a calm and measured approach. He/She must never appear to lose his or her temper, or to act out of anger or frustration simply to punish the pupil concerned.

4. Records

4.1 Detailed and up-to-date records should also be kept of any incidents where force is used. It is always advisable to inform parents of such an incident and to allow an opportunity to discuss it. In the instance of a child in EYFS being restrained, parents will be informed the same day, or as soon as possible thereafter.

4.2 Records of incidents should include the following information:

- The name(s) of the pupil(s) involved
- When and where the incident took place
- Why the use of force was deemed necessary
- Details of the incident, including all steps taken to diffuse the situation and resolve it without force and the nature of the force used
- The pupil's response
- The outcome of the incident
- A description of any injuries suffered by the pupil and others and/or any property damaged during the incident.

5. Legal implications

5.1 Teachers faced with a situation where a pupil needs to be restrained or where force is necessary are particularly vulnerable to accusations by pupils or parents of assault.

5.2 Allegations may be made in the heat of the moment; as a result of misrepresentations and misunderstandings – or they may be false, malicious or misplaced.

5.3 School staff must bear in mind that it is a criminal offence to use or threaten physical force unless there is lawful excuse, or justification for the use of force.

5.4 Similarly, it is an offence to lock an adult or child in a room without a court order (even if they are not aware that they are locked in) except in an emergency when, for example, locking someone in while seeking help would be justified.

5.5 Physical intervention may also lead to a civil negligence action if it results in injury, including psychological trauma, to the person concerned.

6. Corporal punishment

6.1 Corporal punishment is unlawful and cannot be justified by the position of the member of staff acting in loco parentis.

6.2 Corporal punishment is defined as any intentional application of force for the purpose of punishment, which would constitute battery. This does not preclude the use of force in certain situations, where force is not being used as a disciplinary sanction but to prevent personal injury or damage to property as outlined above.

6.3 For Further information refer to:

“Use of reasonable force: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies” DfE, July 2013

Signed

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