



WEST BUCKLAND
PRIMARY SCHOOL
AND NURSERY

West Buckland Primary School and Nursery

Use of Reasonable Force 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 Head teachers, 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 2021 document.

KEY POINTS

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;

Suspension should not be an automatic response when a member of staff has been accused of using excessive force;

School leaders should support their staff when they use this power.

WHAT THE LAW SAYS

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 enables school staff to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a pupil from doing or continuing to do any of the following:

- Committing a criminal offence;
- Causing personal injury to themselves or another;
- Causing damage to property belonging to them or another, including the school;
- Any behaviour prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline in the school.

WHO MAY USE FORCE?

- The staff to which this lawful power is granted are defined in the Act.
- Through this policy, the Headteacher expressly gives authority to all staff who have undergone the relevant training to use reasonable force in the circumstances listed above.

- The Headteacher also gives authority to all staff who has control or charge of pupils (including teaching staff, teaching assistants, special needs assistants, midday assistants and supply staff) who work at West Buckland Primary School and Nursery the power to take reasonable action to prevent a child coming to significant harm or causing it to others.

WHAT IS REASONABLE 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.

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.

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.

SCHOOLS CAN USE REASONABLE FORCE

- In situations where a pupil (including one from another school) is on school premises or elsewhere in the lawful control or charge of a staff member – for example on a school visit;
- To remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;
- To 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;
- To prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground;
- And to 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.*

DECIDING WHETHER TO USE FORCE

As a general rule staff should only use force when:

- The potential consequences of not intervening are sufficiently serious to justify it;
- The chance of achieving the desired outcome by other non-physical means are low;
- And the risk associated with not using force outweighs the risk of using it.

Staff do not require parental consent to apply reasonable force on a pupil.

USING FORCE

Before using force, staff should - where practicable - tell the pupil to stop misbehaving.

Care should be taken to avoid giving the impression that the member of staff is angry or frustrated, or are acting to punish the child. It should be made clear with calm language that as soon as the need for force ceases, it will stop.

Appropriate use of force will range from physical passive presence in between pupils, to blocking a pupil's path, ushering them by placing a hand in the centre of the back, leading/guiding them by the hand or arm, to in more extreme circumstances using appropriate restraining holds.

Particular attention will be given to individuals' needs which arise from statements of SEN or disability. .

Whilst it is highly desirable that staff should avoid acting in any way which might reasonably be expected to cause an injury, in truly exceptional circumstances it is recognised that it may not always be possible to avoid.

Any such injury caused will be properly investigated by the school and will require justification.

TRAINING FOR STAFF

Physical restraint is an available option, only to be used when other means of dealing with the situation have failed. Staff are made aware of this policy and have training on child protection and other training that will ensure they are aware of their duties and the law.

RECORDING INCIDENTS

West Buckland Primary School and Nursery will keep a record of each significant incident of the use of force to control and restrain. Whether or not an incident is significant will be a matter for the School to decide on a case by case basis.

Decisions will include the following considerations:

- The pupil's behaviour and the level of risk presented at the time;
- The degree of force used and whether it was proportionate in relation to the behaviour, together with the effect on the pupil or member of staff;
- The effect on the pupil or member of staff;
- The child's age.

The purpose of recording is to ensure that policy guidelines are followed, to inform parents / carers, to inform future planning as part of school improvement processes, to prevent misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the incident and to provide a record for any future enquiry.

Parents / carers will be informed of the incident.

POST-INCIDENT SUPPORT

If injuries result from the application of reasonable force, medical help should be sought straight away. It is also important to ensure that staff and pupils are given emotional support.

As soon as possible after the incident parents / carers should be informed. If necessary details of the incident will be confirmed in writing.

When assessing the incident, consideration may be given to involving multi-agency partners to offer support or advice.

Where a pupil is responsible for injury to another, as well as holding him/her to account and issuing appropriate sanction, the pupil will be given the opportunity to repair the relationships with pupils and staff affected by the incident. The pupil will

be offered appropriate support to help develop strategies for avoiding such crisis points in future.

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;
- To administer First Aid;
- When a pupil is being congratulated or praised;
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument;
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE.

COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS

If a complaint is made against a member of staff about the use of force the school will follow the guidance set out in Section Eight of the Use of Reasonable Force: Advice for head teachers, staff and governing bodies DfE Ref: DFE-00341-2014.

Any allegations made against members of staff will be acted upon as per Allegation of Abuse against Staff policy and Trust guidance from the Trust Designated Safeguarding Lead, the school's Education Director and the Local Authority Safeguarding Lead.