

Hadrian Primary School

Safer Handling Policy



Date: October 2022

Review: October 2025

Staff responsible: [Ms Chapman Inclusion Manager](#)
[Mr Brown Head Teacher](#)
[Mr Brown School Governor](#)

This policy has been drawn up in response to the non-statutory advice on the Use of Reasonable Force by the DfE July 2013 and Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention by HM Government June 2019.

Key points

- School staff have a power to use force and lawful use of the 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.
- Senior school leaders should support their staff when they use this power.

Staff at Hadrian Primary School accept that physical restraint is only used as a last resort when the action is in self-defence; where there is a developing risk of injury; significant damage to property; or where a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline. Other strategies and techniques will be used before the application of restraint, please refer to Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention HM Government June 2019.

Please refer to Hadrian Primary School's [Behaviour and Relationship Policy](#) for further information on our behaviour expectations and the means by which we seek to reduce the likelihood of situations occurring where the use of force may be necessary.

The following steps should be taken in line with the school's behaviour and relationship policy:

- tell the pupil to stop, and inform them of the consequences should they continue
- warn the child that physical restraint will be used if they do not do as they are asked
- keep calm and do not give the impression you have lost your temper
- send for assistance
- send other children away if possible
- tell the pupil that you are restraining him/her to avoid the pupil harming themselves, others or property. Where potential witnesses are present it is helpful if they hear you give this explanation
- physical intervention should be an act of care and control
- use only the minimum force necessary
- attempt to communicate with the child throughout the incident
- be sensitive of your own strength and body weight and to issues of gender
- inform the Head Teacher if he has not been involved
- record the incident fully in the Red Bound Book (located in Head Teacher's office) and on CPOMS (Child Protection Online Monitoring System).

Hadrian Primary School will ensure that staff are aware of any individual behaviour plans or specific needs of pupils, especially for any pupils with disabilities, which may impact on the range, type and appropriateness of any physical intervention.

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.

Teachers in the school are especially trained to use reasonable physical force to control or restrain pupils. Other individuals authorised at the Head Teacher's discretion are:

- Learning Mentors
- Unpaid volunteers including parent volunteers

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, Head Teachers 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.

Communicating the school's approach to the use of force

- Every school is required to have a behaviour policy and to make this policy known to staff, parents and pupils. The governing body should notify the Head Teacher that it expects the school behaviour policy to include the power to use reasonable force.
- There is no requirement to have a policy on the use of force but it is good practice to set out, in the behaviour policy, the circumstances in which force might be used. For example, it could say that teachers will physically separate pupils found fighting or that if a pupil refuses to leave a room when instructed to do so, they will be physically removed.

- Any policy on the use of reasonable force should acknowledge their legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Schools do not require parental consent to use force on a student.
- Schools should **not** have a 'no contact' policy. There is a real risk that such a policy might place a member of staff in breach of their duty of care towards a pupil, or prevent them taking action needed to prevent a pupil causing harm.
- By taking steps to ensure that staff, pupils and parents are clear about when force might be used, the school will reduce the likelihood of complaints being made when force has been used properly.

Using force

- A panel of experts identified that certain restraint techniques presented an **unacceptable risk** when used on children and young people. The techniques in question 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.

A person should not be placed onto the floor for restraint- this can lead to the restriction of breathing.

Staff Training

All staff have been trained in the legal aspects of the Safer Handling Programme and all teachers have been trained in the physical aspects of the Safer Handling Programme. Staff training will take place every year. Staff training will take place every 1-2 years.

Telling parents when force has been used on their child

The Head Teacher will advise the parent/guardian of any incident involving their child either immediately or at the end of the day according to the seriousness of the incident.

- 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.

The Head Teacher will keep such written information securely and monitor the use of restraint (Red Bound Book). He may also be the first to exercise

judgement on whether the restraint used was reasonable, having made initial inquiries, although other procedures will apply if queries or complaints arise.

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 (see the ‘Further sources of information’ section below) 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.

Where a member of staff is assaulted or suffers injury as a consequence of using reasonable force or restraint they are advised to contact their professional organisation or trade union.