



HIGHGATE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Policy on the use of force to control or restrain children

April 2022

Aims

- For staff to understand when force may be used to control or restrain children
- To identify the variety of situations in which reasonable force might be necessary
- To clarify what is meant by reasonable force
- To set out procedures for staff to follow where it has been necessary to use reasonable force

The Need for a Policy

The school's policy is to try to avoid conflict situations developing such that reasonable force becomes necessary. However it is recognised that there may be circumstances where the use of reasonable force is unavoidable.

Under the Department for Education 2013 Guidance: The Use of Reasonable Force, all school staff members have a legal power to use reasonable force in order to prevent pupils from:

- Hurting themselves or others
- Damaging property
- Causing disorder

Staff members can sometimes be worried that using force will lead to false allegations of unreasonable or unlawful conduct in the form of a complaint or legal action. But if the force used is reasonable all staff will have a robust defence against any accusations. This policy is intended to help staff feel more confident about using force when they think it is right and necessary.

Maintaining a calm environment

Because the use of force should only be a last resort, the school aims to minimise the possibility of force being needed by creating a calm, orderly and supportive school climate that lessens the risk and threat of violence of any kind. Staff follow the school's Behaviour Policy, which has been written with this aim in mind.

Types of Incidents

Specific examples of when reasonable force may be used are set out in the 2013 Guidance and include:

- 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
- Restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts

Reasonable Force

What constitutes 'reasonable force' and the judgement on whether and how to use it will always depend on the circumstances of the case. There are several relevant considerations:

- The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it
- 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 should be the minimum to achieve the desired result
- School staff are legally obliged to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Guidelines when using Reasonable Force

Staff should always try to deal with situations through other strategies before using force. However, when physical intervention is deemed to be absolutely necessary, staff will:

- Before intervening, if possible, tell the pupil who is misbehaving to stop, and what will happen if he or she does not stop
- Continue to communicate with the pupil throughout the incident and tell the pupil that physical contact will stop as soon as the pupil complies with the adult request
- Aim to stay calm and avoid giving the impression that they have lost their temper or are acting out of anger or frustration to punish the pupil

In some circumstances, a member of staff might decide to seek additional adult help before intervening (unless it is an emergency) e.g., when dealing with a physically large or strong pupil, so as not to put themselves at risk of injury. In these cases:

- The adult should remove other pupils who might be at risk and summon help from colleague(s) or the Police if necessary
- Until help arrives the adult should continue to try to diffuse the situation by talking to the pupil and try to prevent the incident from escalating

Application of Force

Physical intervention can take several forms as follows:

- Physically interposing between pupils
- Blocking a pupil's path
- Gentle restraining techniques such as holding, pushing or pulling
- Leading a pupil by the hand or arm
- Shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back
- In extreme circumstances, using more restrictive holds

Staff should **NOT** act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:

- Holding a pupil round the neck, or by the collar, or in any way that might restrict breathing
- Slapping, punching or kicking a pupil
- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint
- Tripping up a pupil
- Holding or pulling a pupil by the ear or hair
- Holding a pupil face down on the ground.

Recording Incidents

Where staff have been involved in an incident where force has been used, a written report must be made as soon as possible (see Appendix 1) and the Headteacher must be informed. The Head of Inclusion will keep a record of all such incidents.

The written report should include the following information:

- The name(s) of the pupil(s) involved and when and where the incident took place
- The names of any other staff who witnessed the incident
- The reason force was necessary
- How the incident began and progressed, including what the pupil did, what was said, steps taken to defuse or calm the situation, the degree of force used, how that was applied and for how long
- The pupil's response and the outcome of the incident
- Details of any injury suffered by the child, another pupil, any member(s) of staff and any damage to property.

Parents are always informed about incidents of this nature. This may be immediately following the incident or at the end of the school day, depending on the circumstances, and may be orally and/or in writing.

Anticipating Incidents

There are children in the school who are more likely to behave in a way that requires physical control or restraint. These children are usually children with emotional and behavioural difficulties who are on the school's SEND register. There is often a particular plan of action for those children in the event of extreme behaviour occurring. Plans for individual children address the following:

- How to manage the child in challenging circumstances (e.g., strategies to avoid conflict);
- Agreeing a plan of action with parents/carers;
- Informing all staff involved with the child about procedures to adopt if necessary;
- Relevant training for staff where necessary
- Planning for additional support as necessary.

Links to other policy documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Department for Education Guidance, Use of reasonable force: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies July 2013
- Behaviour Policy
- Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy
- Guidance on the Use of Touch
- SEND Policy

Staff responsible

William Dean	Headteacher
Rebecca Lewis	Deputy Headteacher (Inclusion)

Policy Monitoring and Review

A copy of this guidance is available to all staff and parents and is published on the school website. Parents will be made aware of this policy when their child is admitted to this school.

This policy is reviewed every two years by the Governors' Safeguarding Committee.

Appendix I

Record of the use of Reasonable Force

Name of pupil on whom force was used:	Class	SEND or other vulnerability:
Date, time and location of incident		
Names of staff involved (directly or as witnesses)		
Details of incident (including any attempts to de-escalate, warnings given that force might be used, reason for using force and description of force used)		
Any injury suffered by staff or pupils and any first aid and/or medical attention required		
Follow Up:		
Signed	Date	

Please Note: The names of pupils should be removed before the completed form is sent to parents and the names of members of staff should only be included with their consent.