



## Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling

### Rationale

It is our responsibility to provide a safe and secure environment for the entire school community (pupils and staff) and to promote and sustain appropriate behaviour. The policy and our procedures for use of reasonable force/safe handling have been prepared for the support of all teaching and support staff

This policy and our procedures have been developed in line with guidance from:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- Human Rights Act 1998 – Articles 3 and 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights ☒
- Health and Safety at Work Act Order 1978 ☒

### Purposes

The following purposes underpin the school's policy and practices: ☒

- To create a learning environment in which young people and adults feel safe ☒
- To protect every person in the school community from harm ☒
- To protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention, which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful: and ☒
- To develop and implement guidance for staff (teaching and non-teaching) so that they are clear about the circumstances in which they might use reasonable force to restrain pupils and how such force might be applied

### Definition of Reasonable Force (taken from the USE OF REASONABLE FORCE; GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL LEADERS, STAFF AND GOVERNING BODIES document)

- (i) 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.
- (ii) 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.
- (iii) 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
- (iv) 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.
- (v) 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.

- (vi) 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.

The working definition of “reasonable force” is: The minimum force necessary to prevent a pupil from physically harming herself or others or seriously damaging property but used in a manner to preserve the dignity of all concerned.

We need to consider: ☒

- Planned intervention in which staff employ, where necessary, pre-arranged strategies based upon a risk assessment and recorded ☒
- Emergency or unplanned use of force/intervention, which occurs in response to unforeseen events e.g. pupil fights

## **Practices**

### Preventative Strategies

This school actively promotes positive behaviour management strategies thus reducing the need for the use of any form of physical intervention, except in an emergency situation. Preventative strategies for inappropriate behaviour(s) are detailed in our school’s Behaviour Management Policy.

### Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is a strategy to prevent the risk of an incident escalating unnecessarily. It is normal practice where a pupil or a small number of pupils are known to exhibit disturbing or distressing behaviour. In order for staff to plan accordingly, risk assessment will be considered only for those pupils who constitute a risk. Risk assessment will be considered from two perspectives (a) environmental risk assessment and (b) individual risk assessment.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Reasonable force/safe handling can be used by any member of staff who is authorised by the Headteacher to have lawful control or charge of pupils, e.g. teachers, classroom assistants, lunchtime controllers.

## **Procedures**

A member of staff may have to decide between making an intervention using reasonable force by placing him/herself in a dangerous situation or standing back and thereby allowing colleagues or pupils to face potential danger. There will always be an element of personal judgement in these decisions. However, it is reasonable to expect a member of staff to engage in some risk where there is evidence of danger and intervention has a good chance of being effective. Staff should not, however, put themselves in personal danger merely to safeguard property. Reasonable force/safe handling can be used by a teacher or other authorised person(s) on the school premises or when authorised elsewhere e.g. out of school activities such as a sporting event or educational trip.

Reasonable force should be limited to emergency situations and used only as a last resort when all other behaviour management strategies have been exhausted and where: ☒

- Action is necessary in self-defence or because there is imminent risk of injury to another pupil or person. ☒
- There is a developing risk of injury to another pupil or person, or significant damage to property. ☒
- A pupil is behaving in a way that compromises order and discipline.

### **Forms of Reasonable Force**

When other behaviour management strategies have failed, staff should send a reliable pupil for assistance and use the minimum intervention depending on the age, sex, physical strength, size, medical condition and any special needs of the pupil. It should be used in a way that preserves the dignity and respect of all concerned. A calm and measured approach should be taken at all times. It should be appropriate to the particular pupil and be in accordance with the school's agreed strategies and the following procedure which must be adhered to at all times: ☒

1. Tell the pupil to stop the inappropriate behaviour ☒
2. Ask the pupil to behave appropriately, clearly stating the desired behaviour ☒
3. Tell the pupil that physical intervention will take place if inappropriate behaviour continues
4. Intervene in a measured way

If the teacher, classroom assistant or supervisory assistant feels at risk he/she should seek support from the nearest staff member. Possible forms of reasonable force used by the school will depend on individual circumstances and may include: ☒

- Separating pupils who are fighting, or who are about to fight ☒
- Blocking a pupil's path ☒
- Breakaway techniques (e.g. when a member of staff is grabbed by a pupil) ☒
- Leading a pupil by the arm ☒
- Shepherding a pupil away by placing hands in the centre of the back or on the backs of elbows

### **Health and Safety**

When using reasonable force/physical intervention/restraint/safe handling, the pupil's health and safety must always be considered. Physical interventions should involve the minimum amount of force necessary to resolve the situation and calm the pupil.

### **Limits on the Use of Force**

The law strictly prohibits the use of force which constitutes corporal punishment. The use of force as a punishment or to intentionally cause pain, injury or humiliation contravenes our Child Protection Policy.

Staff should never act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury. ☒

## **Record Keeping**

All incidents involving the use of reasonable force must be recorded. The Head Teacher will keep an accurate up-to-date record of all such incidents. Immediately following any incident the member of staff concerned must inform the Head Teacher or a senior member of staff and provide a written record/report. The Chair of Governors and the Head Teacher will review annually the entries in the incident book. Records of incidents will be kept until the date of the child's twenty-first birthday. Confidentiality and the young person's right to privacy will need to be ensured. The pupil's view should also be recorded as soon as possible, preferably on the same day.

## **Contacting parents**

Parents/carers should be contacted as soon as possible and the incident explained to them. This must also be recorded. Any complaint from a parent will be dealt with according to the school's complaint policy/procedure.

## **Complaints**

If an incident occurs in school involving the use of reasonable force/restraint by a teacher, the procedures governing such incidents should be followed. This will include informing the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child as outlined above. Any subsequent complaints made against a member of staff will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy/Procedure and in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Staff who themselves are subject to physical violence or assault will be supported, as appropriate, in taking any necessary action against an assailant. The use of reasonable force is only to be employed in exceptional circumstances or in an emergency where a pupil appears to be unable to exercise self-control and whose behaviour is presenting a threat to himself/herself or others. A member of staff should not intervene in an incident without help if there is a risk that he/she may be injured or may endanger his/her life.