



Rockwell Green Church of England Primary School

Reasonable Use of Force Policy

Status:	NON-STATUTORY
Responsible person:	HEADTEACHER
Responsible Governor:	CHAIR OF GOVERNORS
Approved by the Governing Body:	September 2025
Review Period:	Biennially
Review Date:	September 2027

Policy for Physical Intervention and Reasonable Force

This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies and guidance relating to interaction between adults and students, including: Child Protection Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Special Educational Needs Policy and Local Offer, Behaviours for Learning Policy, Complaints Policy, Whistle Blowing Policy, and Dealing with Allegations against Staff. It should also be read alongside the 'Use of Reasonable Force' advice document from the DfE July 2013.

It is recognised that the vast majority of students at Rockwell Green C of E Primary school respond positively to our vision and values, and our behaviour and conduct expectations. The well-being, welfare and safety of all students and staff at Rockwell Green is of paramount importance. It is acknowledged however, that in exceptional circumstances, staff may need to take action in situations where the use of reasonable force may be required. Rockwell Green acknowledges that physical techniques are only a small part of a whole setting approach to behaviour management.

Our policy for physical intervention is based upon the following principles:

- physical intervention should be used only as a last resort when other appropriate de-escalation strategies have failed
- physical intervention must be used in ways that maintain the safety and dignity of all concerned
- staff know that it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment is not used as a punishment; it is always unlawful.
- physical intervention uses the minimum degree of force necessary for the shortest period of time to prevent a student harming themselves, others or property.
- the scale and nature of any physical intervention must be proportionate to both the behaviour of the student and the nature of the harm they might cause.
- incidents must be recorded and reported to the Senior Leadership Team.

- parents will be informed of each incident that requires physical intervention to be used.

1. The Legal Framework

All members of ~~Academy~~ staff have a legal power to use reasonable force. (Section 93, Education and Inspections Act 2006). Legislation that came into force on 1.9.98 (Section 550 of the Education Act 1996) together with national guidance 'Use of Force Guidance' (DfE July 2013) establishes the power of teachers and other staff to use reasonable force if required. *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 (DfE 2013).* Whether the force used is reasonable will always depend on the particular circumstances of the case. The use of force is reasonable if it is proportionate to the consequences it is intended to prevent. 'Reasonable in the Circumstances', means using no more force than is needed (DfE 2013).

2. What is Reasonable Force?

There is no legal definition of reasonable force, it depends on the individual circumstances of each case. Staff are only authorised to use reasonable force in applying physical restraint, although there is also no absolute definition of this. Only the force necessary to stop or prevent danger should be used, in accordance with the guidelines below.

DfE definition of 'reasonable force' July 2013:

- 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 students.*
- 2. Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a student 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 students and to restrain them.

5. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between students or blocking a student's path, or active physical contact such as leading a student by the arm out of a classroom.

6. Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a student under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two students are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.

7. 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 student.

Reasonable force should be applied as an act of care and control with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the student to regain self-control. It should never take a form which could be seen as punishment.

In all circumstances, alternative methods should be used as appropriate, with physical intervention or restraint used as a last resort.

A panel of experts (Physical Control in care Medical Panel 2008) have also 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;
- the 'nose distraction technique' which involves a sharp upward jab under the nose.

3. Our Approach

At Rockwell Green C of E Primary School, we aim to avoid the need for physical intervention and regard this as a last resort in any situation. We always aim to deal with behaviour using a positive approach and therefore this policy should be read in connection with our Relationships and Behaviours for Learning Policy.

DfE 2013: 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.

It is not possible to define every circumstance in which reasonable force would be necessary or appropriate and staff will have to exercise their own judgement in situations which arise within the above categories. Staff should always act within the school's policy on behaviour, particularly in dealing with disruptive behaviour and be mindful that reasonable force would be a last resort.

Staff should also be aware when they are in charge of students during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are acting in *loco parentis* and have a 'Duty of Care' to all children they are supervising. They must, therefore, take reasonable action to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students, which may result in students needing to be controlled or restrained.

When reasonable force becomes necessary:

DO

- tell the student what you are doing and why
- use the minimum force necessary
- involve another member of staff as soon as possible
- tell the student what s/he must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition)
- use simple and clear language
- hold limbs above a major joint if possible e.g. above the elbow
- relax your restraint in response to the student's compliance

DON'T

- act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the student
- involve other students in the restraint
- touch or hold the student in a way that could be viewed as sexually inappropriate conduct
- twist or force limbs back against a joint
- bend fingers or pull hair
- hold the student in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing. eg around the neck
- slap, punch, kick or trip up the student
- use reasonable force or intervention as a punishment

Wherever possible reasonable force should be used by those with appropriate training. However, it is acknowledged this may not always be possible and reasonable force may be used as an emergency measure by someone without training to ensure the safety of children in their care.

Any physical intervention should also be conducted making reasonable adjustment for students with SEN or disabilities.

Who can use reasonable force? (DfE 2013)

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force. This power applies to any member of staff at the school. It can also apply to people whom the headteacher has temporarily put in charge of students such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying students on a school organised visit.

4. Actions after an incident

Reasonable force often occurs in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for the staff involved and the student. A member of the Senior Leadership team must be informed of any incident as soon as possible on the day the incident occurred, and will take responsibility for making arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised. An appropriate member of the teaching staff may be involved in debriefing the student involved and any victims of the incident should be offered support, and their parents informed.

All physical restraint incidents should be recorded in the Bound Numbered Log book kept in the headteacher's office. The member of the Senior Leadership team will also contact parents as soon as possible after an incident, normally on the same day, to inform them of the actions that were taken and why, and to provide them with an opportunity to discuss it. A debrief will also be given to the member(s) of staff involved once an appropriate outcome has been decided.

If negative behavioural responses are an on-going concern, it may be necessary to address the situation through the development of Positive Handling Plan. These plans will include specific intervention programmes, or other strategies agreed by staff who work with the pupil. Students may also require additional support from other services (eg Educational Psychologist.) It is always helpful to also consider the circumstances precipitating the incident to explore ways in which future incidents can be avoided. In some circumstances an EHA (Early Help Assessment) may be appropriate to help identify an additional need for a particular student.

5. Risk Assessments and Positive Handling Plans

Risk Assessments:

If staff become aware of a student who significantly struggles with their self-regulation and could require the use of reasonable force, or following an event which required physical intervention, staff may complete a risk assessment. This assessment will identify risks and triggers. It will also highlight initial positive prevention strategies and responses a student may need to be supported in a crisis. The completed Risk Assessment will be made available to all key staff supporting the student and on the school's electronic EEC Safety system for accessibility. A copy will also be discussed with parents.

Positive Handling Plans:

A Positive Handling Plan describes triggers and signals to recognise when working with a student and provides risk reduction strategies to avoid situations escalating, including personal behaviour support approaches, diversion techniques and de-escalation strategies.

7. Complaints and Allegations

The availability of a clear reasonable use of force policy and early involvement of parents should reduce the likelihood of complaints but may not eliminate them.

If a complaint is made in relation to the use of reasonable force on a student from a member of staff, this may lead to an investigation. All complaints about the use of force will be thoroughly, speedily and appropriately investigated by the Head teacher and Senior Leadership/Safeguarding Lead and following the school's complaints procedure if needed. It is our intention to inform all staff, students, parents and governors about these procedures.