

Physical Restraint & Use of Reasonable Force Policy

Park Community School

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PHYSICAL RESTRAINT & USE OF REASONABLE FORCE POLICY

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PHYSICAL RESTRAINT & USE OF REASONABLE FORCE POLICY

Park Community School fully recognises the responsibility it has under section 157 of the Education Act 2002 to have arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

This policy is a whole school policy and applies to all students. Care and consideration will be given to the age of the child when following the guidance in this policy.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and contractors, paid and unpaid, working in the school including governors.

This policy is informed by: DfE 'Use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions in schools' (Feb 2025); Behaviour in Schools (DfE, Feb 2024); Searching, Screening and Confiscation (DfE, July 2022, page updated July 2023); Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, in force from Sept 2025); Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention (DHSC/DfE, 2019); DfE research on reasonable force, restraint and restrictive practices (March 2024); Ofsted commentary on restraint and restrictive practices (July 2025).

Definitions for the purposes of this policy document:

Reasonable force is defined as using no more force than is needed in the circumstances.

Physical restraint is defined as the positive application of force in order to protect/prevent a student from causing injury to themselves or others or seriously damaging property. It is necessary in more extreme cases, for example to stop a physical fight.

Injury means 'significant injury'; this would include actual or grievous bodily harm, physical or sexual abuse, risking the lives of, or injury to, themselves or others, by wilful or reckless behaviour, and self -poisoning.

Guiding principles

Prevention first (de-escalation and positive behaviour support); last resort & proportionality (least restrictive option, shortest time); safeguarding & dignity; equality & SEND (reasonable adjustments and individualised plans/risk assessments).

Who can use Reasonable Force?

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.

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.

When can Reasonable Force be used?

Reasonable force can be used:

to prevent students from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, from committing an offence, or from causing disorder;

to control students or to restrain them;

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to remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;

to prevent a student behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit;

to prevent a student leaving the classroom where allowing the student to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others;

to prevent a student from attacking a member of staff or another student, or to stop a fight in the playground;

to restrain a student at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts;

When can Reasonable Force NOT be used?

Reasonable force can never be used as a form of punishment.

De-escalation and positive behaviour support

Staff will use the school's behaviour curriculum, classroom routines and relational strategies; apply de-escalation techniques and seek help early; implement and review individual behaviour support/risk plans with parents/carers for pupils with predictable risks.

Guidelines for the Use of Physical Restraint

Professional judgement should be used in circumstances where the use of physical restraint and reasonable force is needed.

Staff should not hesitate to act in an emergency provided they follow the guidelines in this policy.

Staff should always satisfy themselves that the action they take would be considered justifiable by a wider audience of professional colleagues.

In any application of physical restraint, the minimum reasonable force should be used to calm down the situation.

Help should be summoned from colleagues; students should never be involved in restraint.

What to do in circumstances when the use of physical restraint and reasonable force is needed

Approach the student calmly but firmly.

Where possible, the consequences of refusing to stop the behaviour should be explained and it should be communicated to the student that physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary.

A calm and measured approach is required by staff throughout.

SEND and vulnerable pupils

Ensure reasonable adjustments, communication supports and tailored plans; complete dynamic risk assessments; consider multi-agency input; monitor data for disproportionality by need, age, sex, race/ethnicity and other characteristics.

Method of Restraint

The method of restraint employed must use the minimum force for the minimum time and must observe the following:

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Restraint must not:

- Involve hurting the student
- Involve deliberately inflicting pain on the student
- Restrict the student's breathing
- Involve contact with sexually sensitive areas
- Involve locking the student in a room

During any incident the person restraining should:

- Offer verbal reassurance to the student
- Cause the minimum level of restriction of movement
- Reduce the danger of any accidental injury
- Cease the restraint if there are any signs of physical distress in the student such as sudden change in colour, difficulty breathing or vomiting

Physical restraint:

Physical intervention can take several forms and may involve staff:

- Physically interposing between students
- Blocking a student's path
- Holding
- Pushing
- Pulling
- Leading a student by the hand or arm
- Shepherding a student away by placing a hand in the centre of the back or in extreme circumstances using more restrictive holds

Do:

- Summon help immediately. A student can be sent to get another adult.
- Ensure a free passage of air through airways
- Be aware of any feelings of anger
- Continue to talk to the student in a calm way
- Provide a soft surface if possible
- Be aware of any accessories worn by you or the student that could cause injury
- Monitor the student's respiration, circulation and state of consciousness

Don't:

- Try to manage on your own
- Stop talking, even if the student does not reply
- Straddle the student
- Push their arms up their back
- Touch the student near the throat or head
- Put pressure on joints or on arterial pressure points (inside of upper arm, groin, neck)
- Use facedown holds

Training and competency

Staff likely to use physical intervention must receive regular, accredited training emphasising prevention, de-escalation, human rights and safe techniques (aligned to Restraint Reduction Network Training Standards/BILD ACT where appropriate).

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Recording Incidents

Minor or everyday use of reasonable force does not need to be recorded. For example, children running off in the playground and being guided back to the line by the teacher or assistant.

All more serious incidents involving the use of physical restraint must be reported to the Headteacher or the Head of School as soon as possible after the incident. These must be recorded on the Record of the Use of Physical Restraint.

Telling parents/carers when force has been used on their child

Staff need to use their professional judgement on whether to inform a parent/carer, depending on the seriousness of the incident.

In a serious incident where a member of staff has had to physically restrain a student, the parent/carer will be informed on the day and the conversation should be followed up in writing to the parent/carer.

Governance, oversight and monitoring

Termly reporting to governors/trustees on incident data, patterns, disproportionality and actions; annual policy review (or earlier following DfE changes); DSL and senior leaders oversee compliance and training.

What happens if a student complains when force is used?

All complaints about the use of force should be thoroughly investigated in line with the Complaints Policy.

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.

If an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff, the procedures set out in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be followed.