



Foxbridge Primary School

Policy and Guidelines on Physical Contact with Pupils

Including the use of reasonable force to control or restrain pupils

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Signed: (Chair of Governors)

Date:

Policy and Guidelines on Physical Contact with Pupils

At Foxbridge Primary School, we work hard to create an atmosphere, which is caring and supportive for children. This means that there will be times when we need to comfort children, reassure them, give them advice and listen to what they have to say. Our teaching with some children is sometimes best done in one-to-one situations. We often have to help children who have had accidents of various sorts. Children, particularly younger ones, can sometimes be very affectionate towards us. There are also rare occasions when we have to deal with emotional outbursts and bouts of aggression involving children.

The policy has been prepared and is compliant with principles and advice from the DFE based on common law and statute law. The law clarifies when physical contact with pupils may be appropriate or necessary in some circumstances.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools>

This policy has been prepared for the support of all teaching and support staff who come into contact with pupils who may need to be positively handled. This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies relating to interaction between adults and pupils specifically the school's Behaviour Policy. The application of any form of positive handling places staff and children in a vulnerable situation. Staff, therefore, have a responsibility to follow the policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for positive handling.

Definitions of contact

- **Physical Contact:** Situations in which proper physical contact takes place between staff and pupils, e.g. in games/ PE or to comfort pupils.
- **Physical Intervention:** This may be used to divert a pupil from a destructive or disruptive action, for example guiding or leading a pupil by the hand, arm or shoulder with little or no force.
- **Positive Handling:** This will involve the use of reasonable force when there is a risk to pupils, staff or property or if good order is being seriously prejudiced.

Legal Background

Assault

Any unlawful attempt, offer or threat of violence to a pupil, which causes that pupil to have a reasonable belief that she/he is in immediate danger, is an assault. There does not have to be an actual physical attack for an assault to take place.

Battery

If after a threat has been made there is violence, this is battery. (The least touch may constitute battery).

Corporal Punishment

The Education Act made it illegal to administer corporal punishment in maintained schools. Any kind of physical force (which includes all forms of assault, not just blows with the hand) is illegal if used as a punishment. Relevant Act's reinforce this position:

"... the law forbids a teacher to use any degree of physical contact which is deliberately intended to punish a pupil or which is primarily intended to cause pain or injury or humiliation."

Section 550A: lawful physical restraint. This section allows teachers and other people who are authorised by the Headteacher to have control or charge of pupils to use force as is reasonable in all the circumstances to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:-

- Committing a criminal offence (including behaving in a way that would be an offence if the pupil were not under the age of criminal responsibility).
- Injuring themselves or others.
- Causing damage to property (including the pupil's own property).
- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils, whether that behaviour occurs in a classroom during a teaching session or elsewhere.

This applies when a teacher, or other authorised person, is on school premises and outside school when they have legal control or charge of the pupil e.g. on school trips, visits, regular out-of-school activities such as swimming.

Physical Contact

There are occasions when physical contact with a pupil may be proper or necessary. Some physical contact may be necessary to demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching, or if a member of staff has to give first aid. Young children and children with special educational needs may need staff to provide physical prompts or help. Touching may also be appropriate where a pupil is in distress and needs comforting. Teachers will use their own professional judgement when they feel a pupil needs this kind of support.

There may be some children for whom touching is particularly unwelcome. Teachers should note that some pupils may be particularly sensitive to physical contact because of their cultural background or because they have been abused. Physical contact with pupils becomes increasingly open to question as pupils reach adolescence. Staff should also be mindful that even innocent and well-intentioned physical contact might sometimes be misconstrued.

Physical Intervention - Strategies for Dealing with Challenging Behaviour

All challenging behaviour will be addressed using the guidelines set out in the behaviour policy. Should an incident require further intervention be needed then staff will use reasonable physical intervention using the minimum degree of contact to prevent a child harming him or herself, others or property. The form of physical intervention may involve staff doing the following:

- Physically interposing themselves between pupils
- Blocking a pupil's path
- Escorting a pupil
- Shepherding a pupil away

Planning

If we are aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a way that may require physical control or restraint, the school will plan how to respond if the situation arises. Such planning will address:-

- Managing the pupil (e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict, holds to be used).

- Involving the parents to ensure that they are clear about what specific action the school might need to take.
- Briefing staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training or guidance).
- Ensuring that additional support can be summoned if appropriate.
- In some cases, the school may also need to take medical advice about the safest way to hold pupils with specific health needs.

The Headteacher, SENCO and class teacher will draw up such plans. Other staff will be informed of the agreed plans.

Authorised Staff

The Act allows all teachers at a school to use **reasonable force** to control or restrain pupils. It also allows other people to do so, in the same way as teachers, **provided they have been authorised by the Headteacher to have control or charge of pupils.**

At Foxbridge Primary School in addition to teachers, the following staff, who in their work control or have charge of pupils, will be authorised by the Headteacher to use reasonable force to control or restrain pupils:-

- Nursery nurses
- Classroom ancillaries
- SEN ancillaries
- Midday supervisors

Such authorisation is issued on a long-term basis because of the extended nature of the employee's contracts.

The Headteacher will explicitly inform the people concerned and ensure that they are aware of and properly understand what the authorisation entails. The senior management of the school will provide training and guidance for all staff, including teaching staff.

Positive Handling

On occasion there is the need to use reasonable force when there is a risk to pupils, staff or property or if good order is being seriously prejudiced. Members of senior staff are trained on the Team Teach programme.

Types of Incidents where positive handling may be required

Situations in which reasonable force might be appropriate to control or restrain a pupil are likely to fall within three broad categories: -

- a) Where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is imminent risk of injury.
- b) Where there is a developing risk of injury, or significant damage to property.
- c) Where a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline.

Examples of situations that fall within one of the first two categories are:

- A pupil attacks a member of staff, or another pupil.
- Pupils are fighting.
- A pupil is engaged in, or is on the verge of committing, deliberate damage or vandalism to property.

- A pupil is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials or objects.
- A pupil is running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way in which he or she might have or cause an accident likely to injure him or herself or others.
- A pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave school (N.B. this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school).

Considerations here may be the age of the child or the type/s of behaviour displayed.

Examples of situations that fall into the third category are:

- A pupil persistently refuses to obey an order to leave a classroom.
- A pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson.

Before Physical Intervention

Before intervening physically, the teacher should, wherever practicable, tell the pupil who is misbehaving to "stop" and explain what will happen if he/she does not stop.

During Physical Intervention

The teacher should continue to talk to the pupil, calmly and without anger, throughout the incident and should make it clear that the physical restraint will stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary.

The need for assistance - Unless it is an emergency, there are some occasions when a teacher should not intervene in an incident without help e.g. dealing with a physically large pupil or more than one pupil, or if the teacher is at risk of injury. In such circumstances, the teacher should remove other pupils who may be at risk, summon assistance and continue to attempt to defuse the situation orally until help arrives.

Reasonable Force

There is no legal definition of "reasonable force". When it is reasonable to use force or the degree of force that may reasonably be used will always depend on all the circumstances of the case.

There are two important considerations:

- Use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it. **The use of any degree of force is unlawful if the particular circumstances do not warrant the use of physical force** e.g. to prevent a child committing a trivial misdemeanour or in a situation that clearly could be resolved without force.
- 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 i.e. any force should be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result. The age, understanding and sex of pupils may be considerations as to whether it is reasonable to use force and the degree of force that is reasonable.

Application of Force and Appropriate Forms of Physical Restraint

Physical intervention may involve:

- Physically interposing between pupils

- Blocking a pupil's path
- Holding
- Leading a pupil by the hand
- Shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back
- In extreme cases using more restrictive holds

Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional circumstances, where there is an immediate risk of injury, a member of staff may need to take any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of 'reasonable force' e.g. a child running into a busy road or to prevent a child hitting someone or throwing something.

Unacceptable Force or Restraint

Staff must **not** act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, e.g.:

- Holding a pupil around the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict the pupil's ability to breathe.
- Slapping, punching or kicking a pupil.
- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint.
- Tripping up a pupil.
- Holding or pulling a pupil by the hair or ear.
- Holding a pupil face down on the ground.

Staff should not touch or hold a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent.

Teachers should **ALWAYS** try to deal with any situation before using force and in a non-urgent situation force is unlikely to be appropriate e.g. where a child is refusing to follow instructions in class and is behaving in a disruptive way, it may be more appropriate to call for immediate assistance before intervening physically.

Our aim is to maintain good order and discipline and where there is no direct risk to people or property, any action that could exacerbate the situation, such as physically intervening, needs to be carefully evaluated. It is a matter of professional judgement.

Action in self-defence or in an emergency

Section 550A does not cover all the situations in which it might be reasonable for someone to use a degree of force. For example, everyone has the right to defend himself or herself against an attack provided they do not use a disproportionate degree of force to do so. Similarly, in an emergency, for example, if a pupil was at immediate risk of injury or on the point of inflicting injury on someone else, any member of staff would be entitled to intervene. The purpose of Section 550A is to make it clear that teachers, and other authorised staff, are also entitled to intervene in other, less extreme, situations.

Recording Incidents

Staff should make a detailed written report of any occasions where force is used. The Headteacher will keep a record of all such incidents in the school incident file. Staff reports of such incidents should include:

- The name(s) of the pupil(s) involved, and when and where the incident took place
- The names of any other staff or pupils who witnessed the incident
- The reason that force was necessary (e.g. to prevent injury to the pupil, another pupil or member of staff)
- How the incident began and progressed, including details of the pupil's behaviour, what was said by each of the parties, the 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 pupil or a member of staff and of any damage to property

Staff may find it helpful to seek advice from a senior colleague or a representative of their professional association when compiling a report.

After discussing the incident with the staff member(s) concerned, the Headteacher or another senior member of staff, will inform the child's parents as soon as possible and give them an opportunity to discuss the matter.

Complaints

Involving parents plus a clear school policy about physical contact with pupils that staff adhere to, should help to avoid complaints from parents.

However, a dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation, either under disciplinary procedures or by the Police and Social Services Department under child protection procedures.

In these circumstances it would be for the disciplinary panel or the court to decide whether the use and degree of force was reasonable in all the circumstances, having regard to the provisions of Section 550A, the school's policy on physical contact and restraint, whether the policy had been followed and the need to prevent injury, damage or disruption.