



Physical contact & reasonable force

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Policy referenced in statutory guidance (Gov.uk - Advice on statutory policies for schools) Review frequency: <i>annual</i>	
<i>Status</i>	<i>Date</i>
Revision	May 2018
Next review by	May 2021

Physical contact & reasonable force policy

Rationale

We encourage children to behave appropriately at all times but recognise that children in our school are learning social skills and may sometimes behave inappropriately. On rare occasions children may behave in such a way as to put themselves or others in danger. At these points it may be necessary to use reasonable force with a child to prevent them from hurting themselves or others, either purposefully, or as an unintentional result of their behaviour. We would use 'reasonable force' as a last resort, after attempting to use other methods eg talking with the child to persuade the child to do as requested, giving clear instructions or make a situation safe, possibly by removing others from the area. We have a duty of care to ensure the safety of the children in our care and the staff who work with them.

'Reasonable Force' does not include the use of gentle physical prompting or guidance, where the child is happy to comply and the aim is to assist him or her to participate appropriately in activities.

Staff should be conscious of pupil perceptions and recognise that, for some pupils, touching may be unwelcome and misinterpreted, despite good intentions.

What is reasonable force?

- The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve an acceptable degree of physical contact with pupils.
- 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.
- 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
- 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 situation.
- 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.
- 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.

Reasonable force can be used:

- To prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property or from causing disorder in the school.
 - To remove a disruptive pupil from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so.
 - To prevent a pupil behaving in such a way that significantly disrupts a school event, trip or visit and puts others in danger. (If a teacher is attending to a pupil in this way they cannot be in full control of the other pupils.)
 - To prevent a pupil hurting others, either staff or another pupil, or to stop children if they are fighting.
 - To restrain a pupil who may be at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts or self-harming.
- When other alternatives have been attempted and is never used as a first choice.
- Never as a punishment.
- The decision to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member, and will depend on the individual circumstances.
- When there is no alternative, reasonable force should be used preferably if two members of staff are present. These members of staff should be 'Team Teach' trained, unless there is an emergency situation and there is no time to send for additional members of staff. Only one person will use reasonable force if there is judged to be an immediate danger to self or others.
- No member of the school community who is not employed by the school or local authority is allowed to use reasonable force eg a parent or student of any description.
- No member of staff will attempt to move a child on their own unless the child is in immediate danger.
- Deliberate use of physical contact to punish a pupil, cause pain or injury or humiliation is unlawful, regardless of the severity of the pupil's behaviour, or the degree of provocation.

Procedure during a 'dangerous or threatening situation':

- Ask the child to do what you want them to do and give them a reason. Speak in a calm and clear manner. Attempt to 'de-escalate' the situation. Consider moving other pupils and staff away from the immediate vicinity.
- If they refuse and they are putting themselves or others at risk and you think you may need to move them, send a message to another member of staff, preferably a 'Team Teach' trained member (see list available in the hall and the school office) to come to assist you with the immediate situation.
- Explain to the member of staff what has happened and give the opportunity for the other member of staff to de-escalate the situation.

- Explain the need for safety to the child, for both themselves and other children and encourage them to be fair to other children by stopping what they are doing.
- Tell the child that you may have to move them or restrain them if they do not stop what they are doing.
- If the child refuses to co-operate tell the child that you are going to have to move them for their safety and others safety.
- Two people will then use 'Team Teach' techniques to move the child to a safe place where they cannot run to another venue or will passively block their way.
- Both adults to stay with the child until it is judged that the child has calmed down and can be released safely.
- 'Restraint' should be used for the shortest possible time.

After using reasonable force

- Let a member of Senior Leadership Team know if reasonable force has had to be used.
- Ask a member of staff, not involved and preferably a qualified first aider, to check the child has not been injured during the incident.
- Complete a safe handling record with members of the SLT noting:
 - Pupil's behaviour and level of risk presented
 - The degree of force used
 - The effect on the pupil or member of staff
 - The child's details
- Complete the Health and Safety reporting process (email WMAT H&S via internal system) if injury has occurred and give a copy to the Head teacher or Deputy Head Teacher.
- The school will inform parents if reasonable force has been used. This will either be 'in person', by telephone or in writing.

SEN/disability

Should a child have special educational needs or a disability, particular note has to be taken of these needs prior to any restraint taking place and should only ever only be used as a last resort.

Physical Contact

At Chandag Junior School we recognise the fact that children will often make physical contact with teachers and staff.

Acceptable practice includes:

- Holding the hand of a child if needed, to lead them e.g. to safety, guiding them away from a situation

- When comforting a distressed child
- When a pupil is being congratulated or praised
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- To demonstrate PE technique
- To give first aid

We will never encourage children to sit on staff adult's knees but recognise that sometimes a young child will naturally come to sit on a trusted adult's knee (this is less usual in Key Stage 2) or will sit beside them if distressed. The adult should briefly comfort the child, encouraging them to sit beside them. Teachers should then encourage a friend to sit with the child.

If a child hugs a member of staff, which children can often do, then we feel it is perfectly acceptable to acknowledge by putting an acknowledging tap/arm across their back or shoulders, but withdrawing from this as quickly as possible. This circumstance sometimes arises when Y6 pupils say goodbye at the end of Y6 or pupils want to thank or greet a member of staff, for example.

Adults can congratulate pupils, e.g. during sporting events, by patting them on the back.

Where staff feel that a pupil has been 'over familiar' with them, they should report this to a member of the Senior Leadership Team and record the event in writing. This should be signed by witnesses if appropriate.