

# PHYSICAL RESTRAINT AND USE OF REASONABLE FORCE POLICY

This policy was approved by the Local Advisory Board on:	November 2025
The policy owner is:	Acle Academy
This policy will be reviewed by the Local Advisory Board in: (unless earlier review is recommended by the Trust)	November 2027
Policy Version/date:	20.11.25
Signed by the Chair of the Local Advisory Board:	Matthew Arrowsmith-Brown

**Acle Academy 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 pupils. 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**

This policy has been written using advice taken from Use of Reasonable Force, Advice for Head teachers, staff and Governing Bodies DfE 2013. The school acknowledges its legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and children with special educational needs (SEND). Equality Act 2010, SEN and Disability Code of Practice 0-25 years 2015.

### **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 pupil 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.

### **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 Principal has temporarily put in charge of pupils 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 pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, from committing an offence, or from causing disorder;
- In a school, force is used for two main purposes - to control pupils or to restrain them;
- to remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;
- to prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit;
- to 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;

- to prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground;
- to restrain a pupil 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.

## **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; pupils should never be involved in restraint.

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

- Approach the pupil calmly but firmly.
- Where possible, the consequences of refusing to stop the behaviour should be explained and it should be communicated to the pupil 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.

## **Method of Restraint**

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

### **Restraint must not:**

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

### **During any incident the person restraining should:**

- Offer verbal reassurance to the pupil

- 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 pupil such as sudden change in colour, difficulty breathing or vomiting

**Physical restraint can be:**

- Partial – restricting and preventing particular movements
- Total – as in the case of immobilisation

**Physical intervention can take several forms and may involve staff:**

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

**Do:**

- Summon help immediately. A pupil 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 pupil in a calm way
- Provide a soft surface if possible
- Be aware of any accessories worn by you or the pupil that could cause injury
- Monitor the pupil's respiration, circulation and state of consciousness

**Don't:**

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

**Recording Incidents:**

- Minor or everyday use of reasonable force does not need to be recorded. For example, very young 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 **Principal as soon as possible after the incident**. These must be recorded on CPOMS using the reason 'Use of Physical Restraint'.

### **Telling parents when force has been used on their child:**

- Staff need to use their professional judgement on whether to inform a parent, depending on the seriousness of the incident.
- In a serious incident where a member of staff has had to physically restrain a pupil, the parent will be informed on the day and the incident will be recorded on CPOMS.
- In deciding what is a serious incident, teachers should use their professional judgement and consider the:
  - pupil's behaviour and level of risk presented at the time of the incident;
  - degree of force used;
  - effect on the pupil or member of staff; and
  - the child's age.

### **What happens if a student complains when force is used on them?**

- All complaints about the use of force should be thoroughly, speedily and appropriately investigated.
- 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.

### **Power to search pupils without consent**

In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described above, head teachers and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for the following "prohibited items":

- knives and weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- stolen items
- tobacco and cigarette papers
- fireworks
- pornographic images
- any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property.

*Force cannot be used to search for items banned under the school rules.*

## **Other physical contact with pupils**

It is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a pupil is proper and necessary.

- Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper or necessary:
- Holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school;
- When comforting a distressed pupil;
- When a pupil is being congratulated or praised;
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument;
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching; and
- To give first aid.