St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Wisdom & Faith

Use of Reasonable Force Policy

Adopted and signed for on behalf of governing body: (Name)	
Date	30th November 2022
Policy to be reviewed on	September 2024

St Mary's RC Primary School

Policy for the Use of Reasonable Force

The use of reasonable force will always be a last resort for teachers and support staff at St Mary's RC Primary School. This policy aims to offer clear, precise advice and guidance to staff at St Mary's RC Primary School on the use of the use of reasonable force including physical restraint and to clearly set out for parents, carers and others, the school's position and procedures.

Aims:
- To safeguard the well-being of pupils and staff when an incident requires the use of reasonable force.
- To ensure that staff use consistent and safe practices in the use of reasonable force.

Key terms
Reasonable force covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some stage in their careers that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils. Force is usually used either to control or to restrain. 'Control' means either passive physical contact such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path. 'Restraint' means to hold back physically, for example to break up a fight. 'Reasonable' means using no more force than is necessary. The definition of physical force also includes the use of forcible seclusion or locked doors. It is important for staff to note that, although no physical contact may be made in these latter situations, this is still regarded as a restrictive physical intervention.

Minimising the need to use force
St Mary's RC Primary School manages behaviour successfully in a number of ways in order to reduce the number of situations where teachers may need to use force for the safety of pupils.

These include:
- Creating a calm orderly environment in the classroom and around the school.
- Developing positive and effective relationships between staff and pupils.
- Helping staff to develop skills of positive behaviour management and managing conflict.
- Ensuring a sufficient number of staff are on duty at break, lunch and other times of free movement.
- Meeting the needs of pupils with SEN, including through appropriate training for staff.

Who may use reasonable force?
All members of the school staff may use reasonable force. This right may also apply to people whom the Headteacher has put in charge of pupils temporarily eg: unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying pupils on school trips. The power may be used where the pupil (including a pupil from another school) is on the premises or elsewhere in the lawful control or charge of the staff member (for example on a school visit).

Deciding whether to use force
Reasonable force should be the last option but staff should not hesitate to act in an emergency providing they follow the guidance below. Staff are not expected to place themselves in danger. The decision on whether to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member and should always depend on the individual circumstances.

Reasonable force may be used when:
- The potential consequences of not intervening are sufficiently serious to justify considering use of force;
- The chances of achieving the desired result by other means are low;
- The risk associated with not using force outweighs those of using force;
- The degree of force must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or consequences it is intended to prevent.

Circumstances when staff may use reasonable force may include:
- To prevent a pupil from committing a criminal offence;
- To prevent a pupil from causing injury to his or herself or others;
- To prevent or stop a pupil from causing serious damage to property;

- To stop the pupil from engaging in any behaviour which is prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the School or elsewhere when the pupils are in the care of the School;
- To prevent a pupil leaving a classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour which disrupts the behaviour of others;
- To remove the pupil from a classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so.

Reasonable force may never be used as a punishment.

During an Incident
The minimum reasonable force should be used to calm down the situation, to restore safety and appropriate behaviour. The age, understanding and competence of the individual pupil will always be taken into account. Every effort will be made to secure the presence of other staff, and these staff may act as assistants and/or witnesses.

Only in an emergency should a member of staff intervene without help; other pupils should never be involved in restrictive physical intervention.

The pupil should be approached calmly but firmly. Where possible, explain the consequences of refusing to stop the behaviour, **giving a warning at their level of understanding that force may have to be used** and continue to communicate with the pupil throughout the incident; it should be made clear that the restrictive physical intervention will stop as soon as it is safe and ceases to be necessary. A calm and measured approach is needed and a teacher must never give the impression that he/she has lost his or her temper or is acting out of anger or frustration.

The method of restraint employed must use the **minimum force** for the **minimum time**.

The following methods of restraint **must not** be used:
- 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 upwards jab underneath the nose.

Some Dos and Don'ts
DO:
- Be aware of any feelings of anger
- Summon help
- Continue to talk to the pupil in a calm way
- Be aware of any accessories worn by you or the student
- Hold the pupil's arms by his or her sides

DON'T:
- Try to manage on your own
- Straddle the student
- Push arms up the back
- Touch the pupil near the throat or head
- Put pressure on joints

Acceptable forms of intervention
There are occasions when staff will have cause to have physical contact with pupil for a variety of reasons, for example:
- To comfort the pupil in distress (so long as this is appropriate to their age);
- To give First Aid;
- To gently direct a pupil eg: holding a hand at the front or back of a line;
- For curricular reason (for example in PE, Music, Drama etc);
- In an emergency to avert danger to pupils or staff;
- In rare circumstances, when restrictive physical intervention is warranted.

In all situations where physical contact between staff and pupils takes place, staff must consider the following:
- The pupil's age and level of understanding;
- The pupil's individual characteristics and history;
- The location where the contact takes place (it should not take place in private without others present).

Reasonable force can take several forms.
It might 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.

Reasonable force **must not:**
- Involve deliberately hitting the pupil
- Involve deliberately inflicting pain on the pupil
- Restrict the pupil's breathing
- Involve deliberate contact with sexually sensitive areas.

During an incident the restrainer should:
- Offer verbal reassurance to the pupil
- Cause the minimum level of restriction of movement
- Reduce the danger of any accidental injury.

Powers to search pupils without consent
The Headteacher and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable to conduct a search for the following 'prohibited items'.
- Knives and weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Stolen items
- Tobacco and cigarette papers
- Fireworks
- Inappropriate images including pornographic images
- Any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property.

A search will always take place with two members of staff present.

Post-Incident Support
Serious incidents that require the use of force can be upsetting to all concerned and may result in injuries to the pupil or a member of staff. Immediate action will be taken to provide first aid for any injuries and access to medical help for any injuries that go beyond first aid. It is also important to ensure that staff and pupils are given emotional support. Procedures are in place, through the pastoral system of the school, for supporting and debriefing staff and pupils after every serious incident of restrictive physical intervention.

In deciding what is a serious incident, teachers will use their professional judgement and consider:
- The pupil's behaviour and level of risk presented at the time of the incident;
- The degree of force used;
- The effect on the pupil and member of staff and
- The pupil's age.

Recording and Reporting Incidents
If a serious incident occurs which includes the use of 'reasonable force', the member of staff concerned should advise the Headteacher or a senior member of staff immediately following the incident and provide the completed incident record as soon as possible afterwards (**see Appendix 1**). All injuries will be recorded in accordance with the school procedures. Staff may wish to seek advice from their professional association. The school will review serious incidents in order to identify any learning points and inform future plans and policy reviews.

After a serious incident, parents/carers will always be informed unless doing so would in any way endanger the child. Parents/carers will be contacted as soon as possible. Parents/carers will also receive a copy of the school's policy on the use of reasonable force and information on post-incident support.

The letter sent to parents/carers informing them about the use of the intervention may be used to engage them in discussing the incident and for setting out subsequent actions and support. It is recommended that parents/carers be involved in agreeing appropriate support arrangements. It may be desirable to agree on an individual behaviour plan. This would include strategies to prevent and deal with any recurrence of behaviour that could lead to the use of restrictive physical interventions.

Developing a Positive Handling Plan
If a pupil is identified, for whom it is felt that restrictive physical intervention is likely, then a Positive Handling Plan will be completed. This plan will help the pupil and staff to avoid difficult situations through understanding the factors that influence the behaviour and identifying the early warning signs that indicate foreseeable behaviours that may be developing.

The plan will include:
- Involving parents/carers and pupils to ensure they are clear about what specific action the school may take, when and why;
- A risk assessment to ensure staff and others act reasonably and consider the risks;
- A record to be kept in school of risk reduction options that have been examined and discounted, as well as those used;
- Techniques for managing the pupil's behaviour ie. Strategies to deescalate a conflict, and stating at which point a restrictive physical intervention may be used;
- Identifying key staff who know exactly what is expected;
- Ensuring a system to summon additional support;
- Identifying training needs;
- If it is known that any pupil has specific medical needs, medical advice may be sought as to the safest way to hold the pupil.

See Appendix 2 for a Positive Handling Plan Pro-forma

Complaints
It is intended that by adopting this policy and keeping parents/carers and governors informed we can avoid the need for complaints. All disputes which arise about the use of force by a member of staff will be dealt with according to Child Protection and Safeguarding policies. If necessary see the Complaints Policy.

Training
This policy will be explained to staff as part of their induction. The Headteacher will consider whether any members of staff need further training based on the needs of the pupils.

Equal Opportunities
In making decisions about physical restraint all staff will take into account any special educational needs, disabilities, gender and cultural differences that may be relevant to the case.

Review of the Policy
This policy will be reviewed every two years or in light of any significant changes to legislation.

Appendix 1
Record of Use of Reasonable Force

RECORD OF RESTRAINT

Date of incident:	Time of incident:
Pupil Name:	D.o.B:
Member(s) of staff involved:	Adult witnesses to the use of reasonable force:
	Pupil witnesses to the use of reasonable force:

Outline of event leading to the use of reasonable force including description of incident by the staff involved, including any attempts to de-escalate and warnings given that force might be used.

Outline of incident of the use of reasonable force including reason for using force and description of force used.

Outcome of the use of reasonable force:

Description of any injury(ies) sustained by injured pupil and any subsequent treatment:

Follow up, including post-incident support and any disciplinary action against pupils.
Any information about the incident shared with staff not involved in it and external agencies:

Date parent/carer informed of incident:	Time:
Informed by:	

Outline of parent/carer response:

Signature of staff completing report:	Date:
Signature of Teacher-in-charge:	Date:
Signature of Head:	Date:

Brief description of any subsequent inquiry/complaint or action:

Appendix 2
Positive Handling Plan

RECORD OF RESTRAINT

Pupil Name:	Name of teacher:
Name of parent / guardian:	D.o.B:
Class/ Year:	

Identification of Risk

Describe the foreseeable risk (ie. What specific behaviours have occurred)

Is the risk potential or actual? (ie. Has this happened before)

List who is affected by the risk

Assessment of Risk

In which situations does the risk occur?

How likely it is that the risk will arise? (ie. How often has it happened before)

If the risk arises, who is likely to be injured or hurt?

What kinds of injuries or harm are likely to occur?

How serious are the adverse outcomes?

Assessment completed by:

Signature:

Date: