



Platt C.E Primary School

Safe Handling and the Use of Reasonable Force Policy

This policy is drawn from advice contained in the 2013 Department for Education document - Use of Reasonable Force – Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies. This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Behaviour Policy, Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy and the Home School Agreement. By signing the Home School Agreement parents/carers have committed themselves to ensure the good behaviour of their child, and that they understand and follow the school's Behaviour Policy.

Safe handling and the use of reasonable force may, on occasion, be necessary. At Platt C.E Primary School we strive to create an environment in which both children and adults feel happy, safe, secure and valued. We aim to ensure that a whole school approach to behaviour is known and understood by all staff, children, parents and outside agencies. The use of force upon any pupil by a member of staff is a serious matter, and should only be considered as a last resort. It is also acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances, staff may need to take action in situations where the use of reasonable force may be required. However, the law is clear, and the Governing Body has a responsibility to all concerned, to support any member of staff who as a last resort uses reasonable force in accordance with the law, and within this policy.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff in this school:

- clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where reasonable force is necessary
- are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations.

WHAT IS REASONABLE FORCE?

1. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.

2. 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.
3. 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
4. As mentioned above, schools generally use force to control pupils and to restrain them. 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 classroom.
5. 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.
6. 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.

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 pupils such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying students on a school organised visit.

WHEN CAN REASONABLE FORCE BE USED?

- Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- In a school, force is used for two main purposes – to control pupils or to restrain them.
- 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.
- The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can and cannot be used.

EXAMPLES WHERE REASONABLE FORCE MIGHT BE USED

- 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; and
- to restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

SCHOOLS CANNOT:

- use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

POWER TO SEARCH PUPILS WITHOUT CONSENT

- In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described above, Headteachers 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.

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.

BEFORE USING FORCE

Before using force, staff should - where practicable - tell the pupil to stop misbehaving. Care should be taken to avoid giving the impression that the member of staff is angry or frustrated, or are acting to punish the child. It should be made clear with calm language that as soon as the need for force ceases, it will stop.

Appropriate use of force will range from physical passive presence in between pupils, to blocking a pupil's path, ushering them by placing a hand in the centre of the back, leading them by the hand or arm, to in more extreme circumstances using appropriate restraining holds. Particular attention will be given to individuals' needs which arise from statements of SEN or disability.

Whilst it is highly desirable that staff should avoid acting in any way which might reasonably be expected to cause an injury, in truly exceptional circumstances it is recognised that it may not always be possible to avoid. Any such injury caused will be properly investigated by the school and will require justification.

TRAINING FOR STAFF

Physical restraint is an available option, only to be used when other means of dealing with the situation have failed. Staff are made aware of this policy and have training on Child Protection and other training that will ensure they are aware of their duties and the law. Where possible there will be staff on the premises that have specific training in physical restraint.

RECORDING INCIDENTS

A record will be kept of each significant incident of the use of force to control and restrain via the Positive Handling Record (yellow form) see Appendix 1.

The purpose of recording is to ensure that policy guidelines are followed, to inform parents/carers, to inform future planning as part of school improvement processes, to prevent misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the incident and to provide a record for any future inquiry.

A member of staff will inform parents/carers should there be any incident regarding the use of Reasonable Force.

COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS

All complaints about the use of force will be thoroughly and quickly investigated. If a complaint is made against a member of staff about the use of force the school will follow the guidance set out in Section Eight of the Use of Reasonable Force: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies.

Appendix 1

Record of Positive Handling

Platt CE Primary School
Positive handling of a Pupil(s) – Incident Report

Date of incident:	Time of incident:
Name (s) of staff involved:	
Name (s) of pupil(s) involved:	
Name (s) of other staff/pupils who witnessed incident:	
Brief description of incident: <i>(Please be objective and factual, outlining how the incident began and progressed, details of pupil's behaviour, what was said by each of the parties, steps taken to defuse/calm the situation, degree of force used, how applied, and for how long.) Please continue on a separate sheet, if necessary.</i>	

Reason that physical handling was necessary:

Pupil's response & outcome of incident:

Details of any injury suffered by the pupil, another pupil, or member of staff, or any damage to property:

SIGNED DATE

Headteacher Comments:

Parents informed: