



Use of Reasonable force

Signed:

Chair: *R. Patrick*

Head: *B. Wilkinson*

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Statement of intent

At Bursley Academy we believe that it is important to establish a safe, secure and stable environment to enable pupils to grow, develop and learn. We believe it is important to manage behaviour positively, clearly and fairly in line with our school behaviour policy.

We recognise that, in certain circumstances, physical intervention, including safe touch and the use of reasonable force, may be necessary to help ensure the safety of all pupils.

The school understands that behaviour is often a means of communication which may signal that a pupil is in need of support but does not know how to express this; therefore, the school takes a proactive approach to anticipating, managing and minimising potential triggers of distressed behaviour that may cause harm.

This policy acknowledges that situations may arise in which staff members will be required to use physical intervention, and in some cases reasonable force, in order to handle pupils' emotions or behaviour when other measures have failed to do so.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that physical intervention is used in a correct and safe manner, which is in accordance with the relevant legislation and national guidance.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 2011
- Children Act 1989
- Equality Act 2010

This policy has due regard to the following guidance:

- DfE (2013) 'Use of reasonable force in schools'
- DfE (2018) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
- DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education 2022'
- HM Government (2019) 'Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedures
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy



2. Definitions

Physical touch

Physical touch is an essential part of human relationships. In our school, adults may well use touch to prompt, to give reassurance or to provide support in PE.

To use touch/physical support successfully, staff will adhere to the following principles. It must:

- be non-abusive, with no intention to cause pain or injury
- be in the best interests of the child and others
- have a clear educational purpose (e.g. to access the curriculum or to improve social relationships)
- take account of gender issues

At our school the Head Teacher and Pastoral support team are responsible for ensuring that relevant staff are aware of any pupil who finds physical touch unwelcome. Such sensitivity may arise from the pupil's cultural background, personal history, age etc.

'**physical intervention**' is used to refer to any situation in which physical contact with a pupil is necessary – this includes reasonable force, e.g. to defuse a situation in which a pupil is at risk of harming themselves or others, and safe touch, e.g. comforting a pupil in emotional distress.

'**positive handling**' is defined as the overall, graduated approach of responding to pupils' behaviour and emotions with the intention of protecting pupils and staff, and limiting damage to others and property. Positive handling adapts the least intrusive intervention techniques in response to situations, before using gentle physical intervention and reasonable force as a last resort.

'**reasonable force**' is considered to refer to a broad range of actions that may be used to control or restrain a pupil to prevent that pupil from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder. Reasonable force covers force that is necessary and proportionate to the circumstances.

There are two key types of reasonable force:

- '**Control**' – actions used in an attempt to direct a pupil's movements; this includes passive physical contact, e.g. standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact, e.g. leading a pupil out of a classroom by their arm.
- '**Restraint**' – actions used in an attempt to physically bring a pupil under control. This type of force is typically used in more extreme circumstances, e.g. where two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate, causing staff to intervene to hold them back from one another physically.

3. When is restrictive physical intervention permissible at Bursley

Restrictive physical intervention is rarely used at Bursley Academy. However, it will be necessary when its aim is to prevent a pupil injuring themselves or others (For example, pupils playing in a



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dangerously rough manner or running onto the main road) or to prevent them damaging property (For example, pupils throwing a heavy object at/near to expensive computer equipment).

The use of reasonable force can also be used 'to prevent a pupil from engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline....'. However, the use of restrictive physical intervention for this purpose is acceptable only in rare circumstances at Bursley Academy.

The principle of positive handling means that the school expects staff to assess whether the incident requiring a response can be resolved without physical intervention.

Where possible, the school implements an approach of prevention, communicating empathetically with pupils displaying signs of distress or aggression to aid them in regulating their emotions, and altering their environment to minimise distressing stimuli.

Reasonable force may be used in the following circumstances (this is not an exhaustive list)

- Members of staff need to control pupils risking the safety of themselves or others outside of school premises where the same range of support options are not available, e.g. on school trips.
- Members of staff must prevent a pupil from leaving an area, e.g. the classroom or school grounds, where doing so would risk their safety or the safety of others.
- A pupil is attacking a member of staff or another pupil.
- A pupil is at serious risk of harming themselves and a member of staff must intervene to prevent this.
- Disruptive children must be removed from the classroom and are refusing instructions to leave.
- The headteacher or authorised staff are conducting a search for items prohibited under the Education Act 1996, e.g. knives and weapons, alcohol, and illegal drugs.

Teaching staff will be aware of the behavioural patterns, medical conditions and levels of need of pupils in their class.

4. Risk assessment

The use of a restrictive physical intervention will be the outcome of a professional judgement made by staff on the basis of this school policy. It is avoided whenever possible and will not be used for staff convenience.

Restrictive physical intervention will only be considered if other behaviour management options have proved ineffective or are judged to be inappropriate (or in an emergency situation). Before deciding to intervene in this way, staff will weigh up whether the risk of not intervening is greater than the risk of intervening. Any actions will be carried out with the child's best interests at heart. Physical intervention will never be used to punish a pupil or cause pain, injury or humiliation.

Staff are not expected to intervene physically against their better judgement nor are they expected to place themselves at unreasonable risk. In such circumstances, they must take steps to minimise risks. For example, by removing other pupils and calling for assistance.



5. Who may use restrictive physical interventions?

In this school all teachers are authorised. In addition, a list will be attached to this policy of non-teaching support staff who are also authorised. The headteacher will ensure that those on this list are aware and understand what is involved. The headteacher will review this list termly to ensure that it is up to date.

Supply staff will not be authorised to use restrictive physical interventions except if they have been specifically authorised by the headteacher.

Parents and volunteers in the school are not given authorisation. Staff from the local authority may have their own policies about the care and control of pupils but, whilst on the premises, they will be expected to be aware of, and operate within, the policy of this school. This means that visiting staff will need to ask the headteacher for authorisation.

6. How staff at Bursley academy may intervene

Before any physical interventions occur (with the exception of emergency intervention)

- Verbal de-escalation can be attempted.
- Staff follow the school behaviour policy
- There are actions that can be taken to remove triggers from pupils
- The pupil can be removed from the situation without physical intervention, e.g. if they will follow a member of teaching staff out of the classroom.

When a restrictive physical intervention is required and justified, staff will use 'reasonable force'. This is the degree of force 'warranted by the situation'. It will 'be proportionate to the circumstances of the incident and the consequences it is intended to prevent'. Any force used will always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result and for the shortest amount of time.

Staff will:

- use the minimum amount of force for the minimum amount of time;
- avoid causing pain or injury; avoid holding or putting pressure on joints;
- in general hold long bones.
- never hold a pupil face down on the ground or in any position that might increase the risk of suffocation.
- Consider if the pupil has a condition or support need that mean physical intervention would be inherently more dangerous, e.g. asthma which may be made worse by restrictive holds or sensory issues where physical touch would contribute to sensory overload and may provoke aggressive behaviour.

During an incident the member of staff involved will tell the pupil that his or her behaviour may be leading to restraint or physical intervention. This will not be used as a threat or said in a way that could inflame the situation. Staff will not act out of anger or frustration. They will try to adopt a calm, measured approach and maintain communication with the pupil at all times.

Staff will request a second adult to be present to act as support and to witness events to ensure all parties are kept safe and incidents are witnessed.



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Where there is no immediate risk of harm to themselves or others, destruction of property or serious disruption, reasonable force will not be used on the pupil. Any reasonable force used in situations that are non-urgent will only be used once all alternative options have been exhausted and where the staff member in charge deems that the situation is escalating.

The school understands that, in some cases, action may be required very quickly, e.g. in the event that a pupil attempts to run out into a busy road, or where pupils begin a violent fight with one another and staff are forced to pull the pupils apart. Staff will not be penalised for resorting to the use of physical intervention or reasonable force in such situations where it is justified and perceived necessary to prevent harm to others or property in the circumstances.

Positive handling will be applied with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the pupil to regain self-control. Reasonable force is not used as a method of behaviour management or discipline – only as a last resort in situations that require de-escalation to prevent harm.

7. Pupils with SEND

The school will have due consideration to the risks posed by the additional vulnerability of pupils with SEND in terms of physical intervention and reasonable force.

The SENCO will ensure that the stipulations of the Equality Act 2010 are adhered to in relation to reasonable adjustments, non-discrimination and the Public Sector Equality Duty, and will ensure that staff that come into regular contact with pupils with SEND are aware of the ways in which their needs can be met without reasonable force.

The school is aware that pupils with SEND may sometimes experience meltdowns, which can sometimes manifest in behaviour which may be aggressive or seem uncontrollable. Where it is known that a pupil is prone to meltdowns, the SENCO and headteacher will draft a risk assessment to determine planned strategies for managing the pupil's meltdowns that are tailored to the pupil's specific needs, to avoid the use of reasonable force. These risk assessments will be conducted in collaboration with the pupil and their parents, where appropriate.

Some pupils with SEND may require physical intervention when they feel overwhelmed or stressed, e.g. a tight hug; however, this will be discussed as part of relevant risk assessments.

Staff members will not assume that a technique employed for one pupil with SEND will be applicable to other pupils with SEND.

Staff will also be aware that pupils with SEND may engage in frequent, repetitive self-stimulatory behaviour, known as 'stimming', and that some pupils may engage in self-injurious stimming, e.g. repeatedly hitting or scratching themselves. While this can be alarming, staff will be aware that stimming is often carried out as a means of emotional regulation or self-soothing in response to stressful or overwhelming stimuli. Staff members will aim to remove distressing stimuli from the environment, where possible, or will support pupils to engage in less harmful stimming methods, e.g. by providing them with something to play with or demonstrating a less harmful stim, such as hand flapping.



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Staff will be aware that restraining a pupil in a way that prevents them from stimming entirely can cause extreme distress and lead to further aggressive behaviour. Self-injurious stimming and tactics to support a pupil to engage in safer stims will be included as part of the pupil's risk assessment.

The school will adhere to its Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy at all times.

8. What to do after the use of Restrictive Physical intervention

Following an incident of reasonable force, all pupils and staff members involved will be given any necessary first aid to treat injuries as soon as possible, and emotional support.

Wherever reasonable force is used, staff members and pupils involved in incidents will be given separate opportunities to reflect on what happened.

It will be explained to the pupil involved the reason that such intervention was used, and reassured that the use of the intervention was not a punishment for their behaviour, but rather a method of defusing the situation and preventing them from harming themselves or others. The pupil will be asked about the reasons for their behaviour, including:

- Why their environment was causing such distress for them, e.g. in an instance of sensory overstimulation leading to a meltdown.
- Whether they feel there was anything that could have been done to meet their needs before the situation escalated.
- Whether, and how, staff actions were helpful or unhelpful.

The headteacher will check that there is no cause for concern regarding the actions of adults involved. If it is felt that an action has 'caused or put a child at risk of significant harm' the headteacher will follow the school's child protection procedures and also inform parents/carers.

Parents/carers will be informed by the headteacher on the day of the incident. If this is initially done by phone, it will be followed up in writing. Parents/carers will be offered the opportunity to discuss any concerns that they may have regarding an incident.

Staff will be encouraged to reflect on their actions and how they handled the situation, and will be reassured, where appropriate, that they have done nothing wrong and acted in what they perceived to be the best interests of pupils.

If this is an unplanned restrictive physical intervention a **PHP** (Personal Handling Plan) will be put into place for the child if this is deemed necessary and the child does not have a PHP already in place. The PHP will be shared with parents and agreed with the child so all parties are aware of possible measures should similar incidents occur in the future.

If this is a one off incident e.g. breaking up of a fight the use of a PHP will not be required.

PHP's are designed to support staff in the decision making process and type of intervention taken in relation to the children's needs. They also provide triggers and possible de-escalation techniques which have been successful previously.



9. Reporting and recording incidents

A detailed written report will be kept of **all** incidents where reasonable force is used, distinguishing between planned interventions, i.e. those in line with approved strategies for the behaviour of specific pupils, and unplanned or emergency interventions.

Immediately following an incident, the member(s) of staff involved will verbally report the incident to the headteacher and provide a comprehensive written record of the situation as soon as possible, using the [Physical Intervention Report Form](#), this will also be saved on Scholar pack in the behaviour section of the system. The written report of the incident must be thorough, including as much detail as possible as to what had happened before, during and after the incident, the reasons why specific interventions were employed, and any injuries incurred due to the incident.

The headteacher will use the records kept to analyse patterns of behaviour and so decide whether responses are being effective. The headteacher will report on this information to the Governing Body annually.

Staff members who do not record an instance of reasonable force where it has occurred may be disciplined in line with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.

If a member of staff witnesses or suspects the use of reasonable force, where another member of staff is actively involved in physical intervention, they will report this to the headteacher immediately.

Any allegations against staff will be dealt with as a matter of urgency, and in accordance with the procedures outlined in the school's Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy.

The headteacher will be responsible for conducting a thorough investigation to find out the correct details of what occurred; this may include talking to other pupils about the incident, for instance those who witnessed the event.

10. Complaints Procedure

Any complaint will first be considered in the light of the school's child protection procedures, following ACPC guidance. If child protection procedures are not appropriate, the school's complaint procedures will be followed.



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Physical Intervention Report Form

We believe that reasonable force should only be used when absolutely necessary. With this in mind, this form has been created to ensure that all incidents of this type are recorded. Incidents must also be documented in the Physical Intervention Log.

Name of staff member:	
Name of pupil:	
Date:	
Time:	
Location:	
Name(s) of staff member(s) who witnessed the incident:	
Informed parties (parents, social workers, police, etc.):	
Circumstances prior to the incident:	
Details of the incident:	
Details of any negative impact on other pupils:	



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Reason(s) for physical intervention (please tick):	
Danger to self	<input type="checkbox"/>
Danger to others	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Significant damage to property	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was it a planned intervention, e.g. in line with approved strategies for the behaviour of specific pupils? Please circle.	Yes/No
Details of the intervention:	
Any disciplinary additional action taken:	
Injuries (if any) to staff members, the pupil concerned or other pupils:	
Damage (if any) to property:	
Recommendation(s) to avoid future incidents:	
Headteacher's signature:	Date:
Signature of staff member concerned:	Date:



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Physical Intervention Log

We believe that reasonable force must only be used when absolutely necessary. Reasonable force will always to be used in accordance with the Physical Intervention Policy. All incidents of this nature must be recorded in this log. Details of the individual incident will be recorded using the [Physical Intervention Report Form](#).

Date and time	Name of pupil	Name of staff member	Name(s) of witnesses	Injuries (if any) to pupils or staff	Damage (if any) to property	Nature of intervention	Was the headteacher notified?	Signed by staff member

This will be a digital document on the shared staff area.