



USE OF REASONABLE FORCE POLICY

The College does not use corporal punishment. There may be very rare circumstances when a pupil at the College needs to be physically restrained by a member of staff. This section is intended to clarify when such occasions might occur and the procedures which should be adopted.

What is meant by reasonable force?

There is no precise legal definition of “reasonable force” so it is not possible to state, in fully comprehensive terms, when it is appropriate to use physical force to restrain or control pupils or the degree of force that may reasonably be used. It will always depend on the circumstances of each case. However, there are two relevant considerations to be borne in mind:

- The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it. The use of any degree of force is unlawful if the particular circumstances do not warrant the use of physical force. Therefore physical force could not be justified to prevent a pupil from committing a trivial misdemeanour, or in a situation that clearly could be resolved without force
- The degree of force employed must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or the consequences it is intended to prevent. Any force used should always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result; and whether it is reasonable to use force, and the degree of force that could reasonably be employed, might also depend on, amongst other things, the age, level of understanding of the pupil, and any physical disability he may have

When might it be appropriate to use reasonable force?

In a situation where other behaviour management strategies have failed to resolve the problem, or are inappropriate (e.g. in an emergency), there are a wide variety of circumstances in which reasonable force might be appropriate, or necessary, to restrain or control a pupil. They will fall into two broad categories:

- where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury
- where there is a developing risk of injury, or significant damage to property

Examples of such situations are:

- a pupil attacks a member of staff, or another pupil
- pupils are fighting
- a pupil is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials, substances or objects
- a pupil is or appears to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances
- a pupil absconds from school (this will only apply if a pupil would be at serious risk if not kept in school)

What might be regarded as constituting reasonable force?

Physical intervention can take a number of forms. It might involve staff:

- physically interposing between pupils
- blocking a pupil's path
- leading a pupil by the arm
- shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back or (in extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds, including holding, pushing and pulling

In exceptional circumstances, where there is an immediate risk of injury, a member of staff may need to take any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of "reasonable force", for example, to prevent a young pupil running off a pavement on to a busy road, or to prevent a pupil hitting someone, or throwing something.

However, staff should never act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:

- holding a pupil round the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict the pupil's ability to breathe
- slapping, punching, kicking or using any implement on a pupil
- throwing any object at a pupil
- twisting or forcing limbs against a joint
- tripping up a pupil
- holding or pulling a pupil by the hair or ear
- holding a pupil face down on the ground

Staff should also avoid touching or holding a pupil in any way that might be considered indecent.

Recording of incidents where reasonable force has been used

Immediately following any such incident the member of staff concerned should tell the Deputy Master Pastoral and the appropriate Head of School and then provide the short written factual report as soon as possible afterwards. It should include the following information:

- the name(s) of the pupil(s) involved, when and where the incident took place
- the names of any other staff or pupils who witnessed the incident
- the reason that force was necessary (e.g. to prevent injury to the pupil, another pupil or a member of staff)
- briefly, how the incident began and progressed, including details of the pupil's behaviour, what was said by each of the parties, the steps taken to defuse or calm the situation, the degree of force used, how that was applied, and for how long
- the pupil's response, and the outcome of the incident
- details of any obvious or apparent injury suffered by the pupil, or any other person, and of any damage to property

When reasonable force has been used on a pupil, parents will be informed by the appropriate Head of School or the Deputy Master Pastoral.