

Use of Reasonable Force Policy

A copy of this policy is published in the following area:

The school's website

Reviewed: September 2024

Date for review: September 2025

Reviewed by: Deputy Head (Pastoral)

A. Related Truro School Policies

This Positive Handling Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Positive Behaviour and Values Policy;
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- Searching and Confiscation Policy;
- School Rules

B. Rationale and purpose of policy

The policy has been developed in line with guidance from the DfE in the 'Use of Reasonable Force in Schools' (updated July 2013).

The policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies relating to interaction between adults and pupils. The policy has been prepared for the support of all staff who come into contact with pupils and for volunteers working within the school to explain the school's arrangements for care and control. All members of staff may employ reasonable force when appropriate to do so, but they do not have a duty to do so; volunteers assisting with school activities may not employ reasonable force in any circumstances.

Good personal and professional relationships between staff and pupils are vital to ensure good order in our school. It is recognised that the overwhelming majority of pupils in our school respond positively to the discipline and control practised by staff. This ensures the well-being and safety of all pupils and staff in Truro School. It is also acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances, staff may need to act in situations where the use of reasonable force may be required.

Truro School acknowledges that physical techniques are only part of a whole setting approach to behaviour management. Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff in the school clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in responding appropriately, where reasonable force is necessary and are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations.

C. What is reasonable force?

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.

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 pupil needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.

'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.

At Truro School this is understood as the use of the minimum degree of force necessary for the shortest period of time to prevent a pupil harming themselves, others or property. The scale and nature of any physical intervention and use of reasonable force must be proportionate to both the behaviour of the individual to be controlled, and the nature of the harm they might cause. **Fundamentally, 'reasonable force' means using no more force than is necessary to control or defuse a situation.**

Reasonable force may be used to either **control** or **restrain** a pupil, with a verbal warning given before any action is taken.

Control

- 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.

Restraint

- To hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control;
- Must use the minimum force for the minimum time.
- For example, physical restraint of a pupil through holding them back.
- For example, physical restraint of a pupil to bring them under control perhaps by placing a hand in the centre of the back, or in extreme circumstances using more restrictive holds.

D. 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;
- remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;
- prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit;
- 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;
- prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight on the School premises;
- restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

Such force as is reasonable given the circumstances may also be used to conduct a search without consent. Staff should follow the procedure for search without consent set out in the Searching and Confiscation Policy.

Using reasonable force to restrain a pupil should always be the last resort and 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. 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 guarantee avoidance of any injury to the pupil.

E. Reporting instances of positive handling and reasonable force

If a member of staff is required to use force to control or restrain a pupil they should report it at the earliest opportunity to the Deputy Head Pastoral (Designated Safeguarding Lead). A brief summary of the incident will be recorded. When producing a summary of the incident, staff should record the information using the Positive Handling and Reasonable Force report form - **Appendix A**. This form should be handed to the Deputy Head (Pastoral).

The school will contact parents when serious incidents occur involving the use of force on a pupil. In deciding what is a serious incident, the Deputy Head (Pastoral), in consultation with other senior pastoral colleagues when deemed appropriate, 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 or member of staff;
- the pupil's age.

All incidents will be logged by the Deputy Head (Pastoral).

F. Follow up after instances of reasonable force

The school will arrange a follow-up session with a pupil after an instance of the use of reasonable force has occurred which will be conducted by a senior pastoral member of staff. This meeting may also involve the pupil's parents and the member of staff who carried out the use of reasonable force. In all meetings, the pupil will be accompanied by an advocate who will usually be their form tutor, Head of Year or the School Chaplain. This meeting should be conducted after a period of time when all parties have had the opportunity to reflect on the incident; it is not recommended that this session happens the same day, but perhaps the following day or so would be appropriate.

The purpose of the session would be to:

- Review events leading up to the use of reasonable force;
- Discuss whether the pupil's behaviour could have been managed differently;
- To maintain good relationships between pupils, staff and parents;
- To learn any lessons for future practice which can inform reviews of the pupil's behaviour management plan.

An outcome of such a meeting may identify the need for staff training in positive handling techniques. Staff who may be expected to use restrictive positive handling will receive additional, more specialised training and the nature and extent of the training will depend upon the characteristics of the pupils who may require positive handling, the behaviours they present, and the responsibilities of the individual members of staff.

G. Complaints and allegations towards members of staff

All complaints about the use of force should be referred to the Head who will either investigate the matter himself or delegate it to another senior member of staff. All investigations will be conducted in accordance with the Complaints Policy.

When a complaint is made the onus is on the person making the complaint to prove that their allegations are true – it is not for the member of staff to show that they have acted reasonably. A member of staff who is subject to an allegation or complaint will be informed of the complaint once it has been received by the Head.

If the individual making the complaint provides sufficient evidence to warrant a detailed investigation, procedures for managing complaints against staff outlined in the school's Complaints Policy will be adhered to. In accordance with government guidelines, suspension must not be an automatic response when a member of staff has been accused of using excessive force.

The school has a duty of care to its employees and will provide appropriate pastoral care to any member of staff who is subject to a formal allegation following a use of force incident. 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.

Appendix A

Positive Handling and Reasonable Force Report Form

This form should be completed if a member of staff is required to use force to control or restrain a pupil.

This form should be handed to the Deputy Head (Pastoral)

Name of pupil restrained	
Name of other pupils involved	
Date and time of incident	
Location of incident	
Why the use of force was deemed necessary	
Details of incident including all steps taken to defuse the situation and resolve it without the use of force	
Description of restraint used	
The pupil's response	
Outcome of the incident	
Injuries suffered by pupil or others	
Damage to property	

Action taken by whom	
Others present	
Any Medical treatment required	
SSLT member informed	

Signed Date