Use of Reasonable Force

Document Control

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Revisions

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<td>1</td>
<td>P.2, para 5</td>
<td>Remove ‘in the playground’</td>
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<td>Insert ‘on a case by case basis’</td>
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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 student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.
- ‘Reasonable in the circumstances’ means using no more force than is needed.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 Principal 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.

Schools can use reasonable force to:

- 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
- 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.

**Informing parents**

It is good practice for schools to speak to parents about serious incidents involving the use of force and to consider how best to record such serious incidents. It is up to schools to decide whether it is appropriate to report the use of force to parents.

In deciding what is a serious incident, teachers should use their professional judgement and also consider on a case by case basis the following:

- 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 child’s age.

**About this guidance**

1. This is non-statutory advice from the Department for Education. It is intended to provide clarification on the use of force to help school staff feel more confident about using this power when they feel it is necessary and to make clear the responsibilities of school leaders and governing bodies in respect of this power.
2. This advice replaces *The use of force to control and restrain pupils – Guidance for schools in England.*

**Data Protection**

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If you have any questions about the way your data has been gathered or will be retained, please contact the CMAT Trust Data Protection officer at [dpo@cmatrust.net](mailto:dpo@cmatrust.net).