NORBURY HIGH SCHOOL for GIRLS

Reasonable Force and Restraint Policy

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Norbury High School for Girls

REASONABLE FORCE AND RESTRAINT POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to make clear the position of the school with regards to necessary physical interventions and to safeguard the well-being of the students and staff when a situation or incident requires the use of physical intervention.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance published in April 2010, “The use of force to control or restrain pupils” and the Department for Education (DfE) guidance published in 2026, “Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force in schools”.

Aims

- To minimise the need to use restrictive interventions, through the use of prevention and de-escalation strategies.
- To create a learning environment in which both young people and adults feel safe
- To protect every person in the school community from harm
- To protect all students against any form of physical intervention that is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful
- To put in place guidance for staff so that they are clear about the circumstances in which they might use reasonable force to restrain students and how such reasonable force might be applied

Legal Framework

The law allows all adults who are authorised by the Headteacher to be responsible for students to use such force as is reasonable to prevent students committing a criminal offence, injuring themselves or others or damaging property, and to maintain good order and discipline.

Section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 enables school staff to use reasonable force to prevent or stop a student from:

1. Causing injury to themselves or others
2. Committing a criminal offence
3. Damaging to property

a) Causing disorder among pupils at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

The staff to which this power applies:

i. any member of staff at the school, and
ii. any other person whom the Headteacher has authorised to have control or charge of students - this can also include people to whom the Headteacher has given temporary authorisation to have control or charge of students such

as unpaid volunteers (for example parents accompanying students on school-organised visits); note, this does not include any students (including those in positions of authority, such as prefects).

The power may be used where the student (including a student from another school) is on the school premises or elsewhere in the lawful control or charge of the staff member (for example on a school visit).

Staff members can sometimes be worried that using force will lead to false allegations of unreasonable or unlawful conduct in the form of a complaint or legal action. But if the force used is reasonable all staff will have a robust defence against any accusations. This policy and related use of force guidance is intended to help staff feel more confident about using force when it is absolutely necessary to ensure the safety of the school community.

It is always unlawful to use force as a punishment. This is because it would fall within the definition of corporal punishment, which is illegal.

Reasonable force

Whether the force used is reasonable will always depend on the particular circumstances of the case and the test is whether the force used is proportionate to the consequences it is intended to prevent.

This means the degree of force used should be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result.

In schools force is generally used for two different purposes – to control students and to restrain them.

- Control can mean either passive physical contact (e.g. standing between students or blocking a student's path) or active physical contact (e.g. leading a student by the hand or arm, or ushering a student away by placing a hand in the centre of the back)
- When members of staff use "restraint" they physically prevent a student from continuing what they were doing after they have been told to stop; the use of restraint techniques is usually used in more extreme circumstances, such as when two students are involved in a fight and physical intervention is needed to separate them

Unacceptable uses of force

It is illegal to use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment.

Pupils should not be restrained in a way that restricts their airway, breathing or circulation, for example by covering their mouth and/ or nose, or applying pressure to the neck region or abdomen.The use of force can be dangerous, particularly where it occurs on the ground. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, staff should release their holds or re-position into a safer alternative or standing position as quickly as possible.

Where appropriate, the pupil should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. For any form of restraint, including seated and standing, there is a risk of physical and psychological harm, and it should be avoided where possible.

Judging whether to use force and what force to use

There will be times when school staff may need to use restrictive interventions, and they should know this option may be available to them. The decision on whether it is reasonable to use a restrictive intervention depends on the individual circumstances of each situation. To make this assessment, the member of staff should consider the following:

Is it necessary?

- Staff should consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation.
- Staff should assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks, or whether its use would escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself.
- Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.

Is it proportionate?

- Staff should use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce the relevant risks.
- If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy.
- Staff should consider the personal circumstances of the pupil such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010

Have you considered the pupils' welfare?

- Staff should consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. For example, pupils who have experienced an adverse life event, with diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, past trauma or neglect, communication difficulties, or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.
- Staff should seek to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity. This may include, where possible, considering the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.
- Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and explain what the pupil needs to do.
- For pupils with difficulties with speech, language and communication, or with English as an additional language, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies should

be used to ensure the pupil understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.
- Staff should seek to understand how the pupil is feeling and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

Some examples of situations where reasonable force might be used are:

- to prevent a student from attacking a member of staff, or another student, or to stop a fight between two or more students
- to prevent a student causing deliberate damage to property
- to prevent a student causing injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials or objects
- to ensure that a student leaves a classroom where the student persistently refuses to follow an instruction to do so
- to prevent a student behaving in a way that seriously disrupts a lesson
- to prevent a student behaving in a way that seriously disrupts a school sporting event or school visit

Prevention should be the primary consideration.

Steps to avoid these situations should be taken and the adult should be able to demonstrate that those steps were taken. Physical restraint should always be the last resort.

Staff have a responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of their students. They are in a particular position of trust (*in loco parentis*). The following should be applied in all cases:

- Staff should delay if at all possible (however, in some circumstances, e.g. a child running out onto the road, you might be deemed negligent if you do not intervene)
- An ‘on the spot’ risk assessment for each occasion that you feel reasonable force or restraint may be necessary should be made
- Consideration should be given to the environment, the medical circumstances and the clothing
- Action being taken should always be for the good of the child, trying to keep them safe
- Assure the child that the restraint is not a punishment
- Never use other children in the restraint
- Restraint or reasonable force should be witnessed by another responsible adult; staff should call for another adult if restraint or reasonable force is needed and another adult is not available in the area

Reasonable force might be used...

- In self defence, where risk of injury is imminent

- When there is developing risk of injury to the person deemed in need of restraint or others

The senior leadership team (SLT & ELT) or other school staff instructed by them and in their presence can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances when conducting a search for knives and weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco and cigarette papers, fireworks, pornographic images or articles that have been or could be used to commit an offence or cause harm. Such force **cannot** be used to search for items banned under the school rules.

Physical intervention in these circumstances may take several forms, e.g.

- physically interposing between students
- blocking a student's path
- holding
- leading a student by the hand or arm
- shepherding a student away by placing a hand in the centre of the back or
- (in extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds

The law strictly prohibits the use of force which constitutes the giving of corporal punishment. The use of force as a punishment or to intentionally cause pain, injury or humiliation, such as the examples below (which are not exhaustive) should not be permitted under any circumstances:

- holding around the neck
- any hold that might restrict breathing
- kicking, slapping or punching
- forcing limbs against joints
- tripping
- holding by the hair
- holding the student face down on the ground

Physical intervention may involve staff:

- holding
- pushing
- pulling

Staff must always avoid touching or holding a student in a way that might be considered indecent.

Consideration for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

Some children and young people with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Triggers may include pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar situations or environments or feelings of fear and anxiety. In particular, pupils who are non-verbal or find verbal communication challenging may express their needs, discomfort or confusion

through actions. This can lead to pupils with SEND being disproportionately subject to the use of restrictive interventions.

Staff should seek to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour so that they can provide proactive support, create an inclusive environment and consider the impact of school policies on pupils with SEND. We promote relational practice where staff know individual pupils well to help identify and manage risk such as trigger points when challenging behaviour is more likely to occur, and develop proactive strategies to reduce the likelihood of restrictive interventions being used.

General principle of behaviour management

Because the use of force should only be a last resort, staff and volunteers at Norbury High School recognise that they should minimise the possibility of force being needed by creating a calm, orderly and supportive school climate that lessens the risk and threat of violence of any kind.

Recording and Reporting the use of force (significant incidents)

Governing bodies of maintained schools and the proprietors of other schools must ensure that a procedure is in place for recording each significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil, as part of the school's duty under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Incidents must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event. It should be recorded by the staff member(s) involved and they should do this no later than the same day.

Our staff will use the Trusts Incident Report form set out in Appendix A. The local academy committee (LAC) will take all reasonable steps to ensure that staff follow the procedure. This is to ensure that parents/carers are kept informed of serious events at school concerning their child. If reporting the incident to a parent/carer would be likely to result in significant harm to the student, then the incident must be reported to the local authority where the student normally lives.

Whether an incident is significant will vary on a case-by-case basis but, in determining whether it is, staff will need to consider factors such as the student's behaviour and the level of risk presented at the time, the degree of force used and whether it was proportionate in relation to the behaviour together with the effect on the student or member of staff. Members of staff should not put themselves at risk. An individual would not be seen to be failing in their duty of care by not using force to prevent injury, if doing so threatened their own safety.

Such records may be required for future reference. Immediately following any such incident the member of staff concerned should inform the Headteacher or a senior member of staff and provide a written report. Parents/carers should be contacted as soon as possible and the incident explained to them. This action will also be recorded in the incident log. Staff should keep their own copy of any written report.

Roles and Responsibilities

The school will endeavour to ensure that all staff know and understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to the management of students. Legislation allows 'members of staff' to use 'reasonable force' and defines a member of staff as 'any teacher who works at the school and any person who, with the authority of the Headteacher, has lawful control or charge of students at the school'. The Headteacher will confirm with all staff whether they meet the terms of this definition.

Regular training will be given to staff and new staff should be given a copy of this policy as part of their induction.

Staff should be made aware of individual students considered likely to pose serious behavioural problems or violence.

The SENDCO will keep staff informed about students with special educational needs who may require special attention with regard to their physical management. Staff will consult with the SENDCO regarding any concerns they have about the physical management of students with special educational needs.

Preventative Strategies

All staff in school need to be aware of strategies and techniques for dealing with difficult students and steps which they can take to defuse and calm a situation. The strategies listed below as examples will be influenced by the age of the student(s) and the context in which they are applied:

1) move calmly and confidently;
2) make simple, clear statements;
3) intervene early;
4) try to maintain eye contact;
5) if necessary, summon help before the problem escalates; and
6) if possible, remove the audience from the immediate location.

Action Steps

1) Tell the student who is misbehaving to stop and tell her/him the possible consequences of failing to do so.
2) Summon another adult (another adult should be present if physical restraint of any kind needs to be applied).
3) Phone the office or send another student/a message to alert a member of the senior leadership team.
4) Continue to communicate with the student throughout the incident.
5) Make it clear that physical intervention will cease as soon as it is no longer necessary.
6) Appropriate follow-up action should be taken, which may include:
    a. providing medical support,
    b. providing respite for those involved, and/or
    c. accessing external advice/support.

A calm and measured approach to a situation is needed and staff should never give the impression that they have lost their temper or are acting out of anger or frustration when handling a problem. Whilst limiting damage to property and/or persons, it is advisable not to ‘corner’ or give the child a feeling of being ‘trapped’ in any way as this can often inflame reactions. Where possible, allow the child space to move.

Dealing with complaints and allegations regarding the use of force

Parents/carers and students have a right to complain about actions taken by school staff, including any use of force.

If a specific allegation is made against a member of staff then the school will follow procedures set out in

- the school’s Complaints Policy
- the school’s policy on dealing with allegations against staff

with reference to the following DCSF Guidance:

- Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools April 2026
- Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2026

RELATED POLICIES

This policy needs to be read in conjunction with:

- Behaviour and Anti-bullying Policy
- Equality Information and Objectives
- Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy

APPENDIX A: INCIDENT RECORD FORM

Use of Reasonable Force, Restraint and/or Seclusion

SECTION 1: BASIC DETAILS

School:	
Date of incident:	
Time physical intervention started:	
Time physical intervention ended:	
Approximate duration:	
Location of incident:	

SECTION 2: PUPIL DETAILS

Pupil name:	
Date of birth:	
Year group:	
Identified SEND:	
SEND status (SEN Support / EHCP):	
Primary need (if known):	
Relevant medical, sensory, communication or vulnerability factors:	

SECTION 3: STAFF AND STUDENTS INVOLVED IN THE INCIDENT

Name and role of staff member(s) directly involved:	
Names of any witnesses:	
Have witness statements been collected and by whom (roles)?	No ☐ Yes ☐ Details:
Has a witness statement been collected from the child?	No ☐ Yes ☐

SECTION 4: DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT

Brief factual account of what happened, including context and behaviours of concern:	
Known or suspected triggers or early warning signs:	

Strategies used before restrictive intervention:

☐Verbal advice and support	☐Planned ignoring	☐Withdrawal directed	☐Distraction
☐Humour (appropriate)	☐Calm talking	☐Swap adult	☐Diversion
☐Firm clear directions	☐Calm stance	☐Success reminders	☐Reassurance
☐ Withdrawal offered	☐Patience	☐Contingent touch	☐ Negotiation
☐Limited choices	☐Sign language		☐ Opportunity to draw and write
	☐Reminders about consequences		

Any other strategies:

Why these strategies were assessed as insufficient:

☐Risk to self	☐Risk to safe physical environment	☐Prevention of psychological distress	☐Prevention of criminal offence
☐Risk to others	☐Risk to safe psychological environment	☐Prevention of physical harm	☐Temporary loss of competence or capacity

Any other reason:

SECTION 6: RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTION USED

What restrictive intervention was used?	☐Physical restraint ☐Seclusion ☐Non-force restraint (e.g.removal of walking aids)

Description of what was done, including degree of force:	
Why was this intervention assessed as necessary?	
Type of intervention used:	
Was this the least restrictive option available? Reason for this.	

SECTION 7: WELFARE AND MEDICAL INFORMATION

Were there any injuries or physical effects	YES ☐	NO ☐
Details		
Was first aid or medical support provided	YES ☐	NO ☐
Details		
Any emotional distress observed:	YES ☐	NO ☐
Details		

SECTION 8: SECLUSION (complete if applicable)

Was seclusion used?	YES ☐	NO ☐
Was the pupil continuously supervised?	YES ☐	NO ☐
Location of seclusion:	YES ☐	NO ☐
Duration		
How was the pupil supported to exit seclusion?		

SECTION 9: POST-INCIDENT ACTIONS

Immediate actions taken:
Internal support to consider: ☐Are sanctions needed? ☐Behaviour support reviewed ☐Risk assessment reviewed ☐SEN provision reviewed ☐Restorative conversations Any other support: Follow-up support planned:
External support to consider: ☐Medical referrals ☐Referral to social care ☐Health and safety reports completed ☐LADO referral ☐Support from police ☐Liaising with external support from SEN team in the local authority ☐Is an emergency annual reviews needed?

SECTION 10: PARENT/CARER REPORTING

Has the incident been reported to parents/carers?	YES ☐	NO ☐
Method:		
Date and time reported:		
Name of person who reported:		
If not reported, state statutory reason:		

SECTION 11: REVIEW AND LEARNING

Does this incident indicate the need to review behaviour support, risk assessment, reasonable adjustments, training or environment? Explain how if needed.

SECTION 12: SIGNATURES

Completed by (name and role)	
Signature	

Date	
Reviewed by (senior leader)	
Signature	
Date	

Logging:

Once this form has been completed this should be uploaded to CPOMS under the heading:

Restrictive Intervention

- Physical restraint
- Seclusion
- Non-force restraint

Please note: the names of other students should be removed before the completed form is sent to parents and the names of members of staff should only be included with their consent.

The member of staff/s involved in the incident compile the incident report. The member of staff with lead responsibility for safeguarding checks the record and that the school provides the member of staff involved in the incident with a copy of the final version. It is important that this information is treated in confidence.

All accounts of the same incident should be recorded, including those of the student or students involved. Parents should not be given a copy of the incident record as a matter of course, but they should be told when and where the incident took place, why it was decided that force had to be used, the strategies used to try to avoid having to use force, what force was used, whether there were any injuries and what follow-up action (supportive and/or disciplinary) was being taken in relation to their child. Ordinarily the names of those involved in the incident should not be disclosed in the report; however, the student may give this information to the parent or the parent can request the information from the school. The school should deal with these requests in accordance with GDPR guidelines.