



Abbots Ripton Church of England Primary School

Positive Handling (including the use of reasonable force) Policy

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Our church school creates a firm foundation where together, with God's help and with the help of others, we learn for life, achieve our best and grow in faith.

Introduction

At Abbots Ripton Church of England Primary School there may, at times, be children with challenging behaviour that may necessitate the use of physical intervention to prevent injury to themselves, staff and children, damage to property, or the breakdown of a safe and enjoyable learning environment.

The aim of positive handling is not punishment or control but to support safe learning for everyone.

This policy has been written to support all staff who come into contact with children and for volunteers working within the school to explain the school's arrangements for positive handling.

Relevant legislation Informing this Policy

The use of all forms of physical intervention and physical contact are governed by the criminal and civil law. The unwarranted or inappropriate use of force may constitute an assault. In addition it may infringe the human rights of a child or young person.

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

- committing a criminal offence
- causing personal injury or damage to a property
- prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among the pupils, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Government Advice Informing This Policy

[Behaviour in schools-advice for Headteachers and school staff \(February 2024\)](#)

[Use of Reasonable Force: Advice for Head teachers, staff and governing bodies \(July 2013\)](#)

Values and Principles

As a Voluntary Aided school with strong Christian values, we expect to see Christian attitudes forming the basis of the whole school ethos with the church, the school and the community working together to set a high standard and expectations for behavior.

At Abbots Ripton CE Primary School we believe that everybody in the school community:

- has the right to feel safe, secure and cared for;
- has the right to access appropriate support to manage their emotions and their behavior;
- should be provided with a framework so that all staff who come into contact with children are clear about their roles and responsibilities within the context of positive handling;
- should be provided with information and guidance to support the school's Safeguarding and Positive Behaviour Policies.

Staff have a responsibility to follow this policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for physical intervention. Reasonable force will only be

used as a last resort when all other behaviour management/ de-escalation strategies have failed or when children, staff or property are at risk.

What is physical intervention or 'reasonable force'?

The use of force is illegal if the physical circumstances do not warrant it. The force used should always be the minimum needed to regain and ensure safety and control for everyone involved or present.

Force is considered **reasonable** when:

- It is in proportion to the consequences it's intended to prevent
- The level and duration are the minimum necessary to achieve the desired result

Force is usually used either to **control** or **restrain** pupils.

Using force to control pupils includes:

- Passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path
- Active physical contact, such as leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom
- Restraint is typically used in more extreme circumstances, such as when 2 pupils are fighting and refuse to separate. This might include:
 - Holding a pupil back physically
 - Bringing a pupil under control

Staff should try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases this may not always be possible.

Who can use reasonable force?

All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force.

It can also be used by anyone who's been put in charge of pupils temporarily by the headteacher, such as:

- Unpaid volunteers
- Parents accompanying a school trip

When can reasonable force be used?

Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from:

- Hurting themselves or someone else
- Damaging property
- Causing disorder

It can **never** be used as a form of punishment – this will always be unlawful.

It's up to staff's professional judgement to decide whether to physically intervene. This decision should always depend on the individual circumstances.

Situations where force can be used

You may use reasonable force to:

- Remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to leave the room
- 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 stop a fight in the playground
- Restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts
- Conduct a search for a set list of prohibited items which includes knives and weapons, if you're the headteacher or an authorised member of staff.

This list of examples isn't exhaustive.

Alternative Strategies

At Abbots Ripton we pro-actively foster positive relationships and only use reasonable force when there is no realistic alternative. This means that we expect staff to conduct a risk assessment and choose the safest alternative. We expect staff to think creatively about any alternatives to physical intervention which may be effective. We acknowledge that there are some situations in which the need for positive handling is immediate and where there are no equally effective alternatives. However, in many circumstances there are alternatives e.g. use of assertiveness skills such as:

- repeating an instruction until the child complies
- use of a distracter, such as a loud whistle, to interrupt the behaviour (such as a fight) long enough for other methods of verbal control to be effective
- withdrawal of attention (audience) e.g. if an action such as damage to property is threatened
- other techniques designed to defuse the situation, such as the avoidance of confrontation, or use of humour (in these cases the incident can be dealt with later when emotions are no longer running high)
- the employment of other sanctions consistent with our Positive Behaviour Policy.

Pupils with SEND

Reasonable force can be used on pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), but when deciding whether this is appropriate, you should know and understand the needs of the pupil concerned.

If a pupil is displaying a pattern of behaviour that means we need to use reasonable force repeatedly, we will work with parents/carers to produce a risk assessment and a plan that sets out the types of physical interventions that will be used in extreme circumstances.

How to use reasonable force

- Warn the child of what you are going to do. Offer them the chance to avoid the use of force by stopping the behaviour
- Carry out the physical intervention using no more force than necessary
- Stay calm and do not react to any abusive or highly-emotional language from the pupil
- Allow the pupil to calm down, and once you feel the restraint is no longer necessary begin to release your hold on the pupil
- Discuss the behaviour that triggered the situation with the pupil

- Complete an incident report (in the Blue Physical Intervention Book held in the Headteacher's office) and inform parents

Staff should not:

- Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- Involve themselves in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil
- Involve other pupils in the restraint
- Touch or hold the pupil in sexual areas
- Twist or force limbs back against a joint
- Bend fingers or pull hair
- Hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around the neck, lying face down or pulling arms across the child's chest
- Slap, punch, kick or trip up the pupil

Staff training

There's no legal requirement for staff to be trained in physical restraint. However, if we admit a pupil, or it becomes apparent that a pupil may regularly require physical intervention, training will be undertaken.

After the incident and Recording

Where physical control or restraint has been used, a record of the incident will be kept in the hard bound blue book in the Headteacher's office. A log of misbehavior may also need to be completed in line with our Positive Behaviour Policy.

- The log needs to be completed as soon as possible after the incident.
- Parents will be informed by telephone or email and this will also be recorded on the log.
- A Health and Safety Accident/Incident Form will be completed online in situations where injury has occurred to either members of staff or children. This will be done electronically by the Headteacher.
- Staff and children will be given basic first aid treatment for any injuries that require treatment. Where staff and children have been involved in an incident involving reasonable force they should have access to emotional support. This can be provided by other members of staff or if an exceptionally serious incident occurs then a referral to Occupational Health may be necessary.
- Debriefing must take place as soon as possible after the incident has been dealt with.
- Any injuries must be recorded in the school accident book.
- Teaching Assistants can seek guidance from the class teacher on reporting and class teachers are responsible for supporting supply staff that sustain injuries.
- If a member of staff needs hospital or GP attention following an incident with a child at work a RIDDOR online form will be completed by the Headteacher.

The Headteacher will ensure that each incident is reviewed and investigated further as required. It is the role of the school leadership team to support staff who work with children with challenging behaviour.

If further action is required in relation to a member of staff or a child, this will be pursued through the appropriate procedures:

- Review of Risk Reduction Plan or introduction of this if not in place
- Child Protection Procedure (this may involve investigations by Police and/or Social Services)
- Staff or Children Disciplinary Procedures

- School Positive Behaviour Policy
- County Exclusions Guidance in the case of violence or assault
- Risk assessment if necessary
- The member of staff will be kept informed of any action taken
- In the case of any action concerning a member of staff, he/she will be advised to seek advice from his/her professional association/union.

Post-Incident Support

We need to consider the thoughts, feeling and emotions of those involved. This will include:

Stage 1 – Immediate ‘Are you ok’ This should occur before people leave to go home.

Stage 2 – De-briefing checking people have adjusted to an emotionally difficult event. This should occur within 48 hours.

Stage 3 – Counselling: formal support. Support is available when requested by a member of staff, however it is not imposed.

Post Incident Review

Focus on actions and behaviours:

- Who did what, when, why, how?
- What was the outcome?
- What does it tell us about what we already know about the young person?
- What have we learnt and what or how does this inform our practice?

If a child or parent complains when force is used

All complaints about the use of force will be investigated by the Headteacher or in the case of the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will investigate.

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 defense to any criminal prosecution or other civil or public law action. This reinforces the need for staff to fill in the Blue Bound Book on the day of the incident.

Any complaints about staff will be investigated through the School's Complaints Policy. If necessary the complaint will also be dealt with by the Staff Disciplinary Procedures.



Ratification of Policy

Positive Handling (including the use of reasonable force) Policy

Presented to:committee

Policy ratified on:.....

Signed by:

Chair of Committee :.....

Chair of Governors:.....

Head teacher:.....