



## School Policy on the Use of Force

Updated July 2013. To be reviewed at appropriate intervals.

This policy has considered the guidance provided by the Local Authority, April 2008. Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 provided guidance to educational establishments on the use of reasonable force to restrain or control pupils. **Circular 10/98** was subsequently issued to give assistance in interpreting the legislation. This document was considered in the writing of this policy.

### Introduction

Since schools are populated by young people it can be expected that they will sometimes fall out with each other; disagreements may lead to fighting. Vandalism also exists. On very rare occasions, unwelcome people may come on to the school site looking for a student, which could also result in a physical assault.

### To whom does the policy apply?

The use of force policy described here applies to all teachers and any other person whom the head has authorised to supervise pupils. This includes support staff whose job normally includes supervising pupils such as teaching assistants, learning support assistants, learning mentors and lunchtime supervisors. It can also include people to whom the head has given temporary authorisation to of pupils such as paid members of staff whose job does not normally involve supervising pupils (for example catering or premises-related staff) and unpaid volunteers (for example parents accompanying pupils on school organised visits). It does not include pupils including those with responsibility such as prefects. In effect, the policy applies to any adult working in the school.

### Policy

The school has a duty of care to the students and staff to keep them as safe as possible and take all reasonable steps to ensure safety is maintained. Our school is not an environment where physical assault is prevalent but it does occasionally happen and teachers need to be prepared to restrain if necessary. It is lawful to use reasonable levels of physical intervention when a child is in danger or endangering other people. Physical assaults almost exclusively occur between students. The school teaches all students about why physical assault is unacceptable through promoting respect in general, PSHE classes and Assemblies, if necessary. Our school code of conduct makes it clear that the resolving of disputes must not be dealt with physically.

### Practice and procedure

Members of the teaching staff have a duty of care to take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of students in the care of the school during the hours of the school day on school premises. They also have a responsibility to themselves to stay safe. We must act as a reasonable parent and make every effort to restrain the pupils if they are endangering themselves, other people or property. What is reasonable is difficult to define and will depend on the set of circumstances at the time (see below). However, by way of example, it would probably be considered unreasonable for, say, two experienced, physically fit and able-bodied teachers **not** to restrain two Year 7 students who have just started to fight over a football in the school yard and who are endangering themselves.

#### *Diffusing a situation*

Disagreements between students will usually take the form of verbal assaults, tempers will be raised and student on-lookers may possibly be encouraging the children to further the dispute. If a teacher witnesses a disagreement between students then every attempt should be made to diffuse the issue verbally; clear warnings and requests must be given.

- Encourage the children to stop arguing and to move away from each other. You may then investigate the causes of the dispute and pass details on to pastoral staff, as necessary.

- Send for assistance if you feel that your advice has not been taken fully and that the dispute could escalate.
- Give a strong warning to on-lookers to move away from the area, using the threat of disciplinary action against students who encourage others to fight.

### *Physical aggression*

If a teacher witnesses students fighting then the following steps should be taken:

1. Issue a firm request to stop fighting and request help from another teacher;
2. Send student onlookers away from the area, using the threat of disciplinary action against students who encourage others to fight.
3. If the fighting continues then an attempt to separate the students (consistent with the principle of using the minimum force required) may be necessary **but only after considering your own capacity to be effective.**

In doing this you will automatically assess the following:

- The likelihood of you sustaining injury in attempting to break up the fight;
- The condition of your health at the time;
- Your own confidence and skills;
- The age of the students;
- The weight of the students;
- The number of students;
- Whether weapons are involved and
- The level of ferocity of the fight.

4. In extreme cases the Police may need to be called to intervene and deal with subsequent enquiries.

5. After the fight:

- Arrange for First-Aid assistance and they will take over the health and safety aspect and students' parents/carers will be contacted.
- Complete an incident report form and seek help from the pastoral team as soon as possible. They will investigate the matter further.

### *Damage to property*

Wilful damage to property (including students' own property) is an offence and adults working in schools have a responsibility to prevent this occurring whenever possible. This includes physical restraint. Please refer to factors in point 3 above which apply to this situation as well. *Advice for non-teaching colleagues who do not have authorisation from the Headteacher.* Please read the advice above. You are at liberty to persuade students not to fight and would be expected to ask them to stop. The most important thing is to send for help. Restraining pupils is not advisable. *Training* In reality, we do not work in a school where force is used regularly. Training every adult in specific restraining techniques would be neither practical nor reasonable. The principle of using the *minimum force required* is the overriding point of consideration with due consideration of your capacity to be effective whilst at the same time maintaining your own safety.

**Training on de-escalation is given to all staff.** More advanced training is available to senior colleagues if it thought necessary.