

The use of reasonable force and physical restraint

This policy should be read in conjunction with LSHS behaviour policy. The aim of the policy is to clarify under what circumstance staff at LSHS might use reasonable force.

Where incidents of poor behaviour occur, we will endeavor to use all means available to de-escalate a situation and use force against pupils as a last resort. However, in extreme cases staff may find it necessary to use force against a pupil. We do not require parental consent to use force on a pupil. Nevertheless, we will notify parents/carers if force is used under any circumstances and this will be recorded formally and passed onto the Assistant Head responsible for behavior.

What is reasonable force?

- The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by many 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.
- Force may be used 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 will 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 head teacher 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 may be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property or from causing disorder. Therefore, the use of reasonable force has 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 provides some examples of situations where reasonable force may be used:

- to remove a disruptive child from the classroom where he/she has refused to follow an instruction to do so;
- to prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit;
- to 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;
- to restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outburst;
- to prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground.

NB It is always unlawful to use force as a punishment and staff will only use reasonable force in line with the guidance in this policy.

It is the responsibility of the Head and Governors to ensure that staff are trained in appropriate techniques of de-escalation and use of reasonable force.

Power to search pupils without consent

In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described above, head teachers and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for the following “prohibited items”:

- knives and weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- stolen items
- tobacco, cigarette papers or other smoking paraphernalia
- e-cigarette, vapes and other cigarette substitute paraphernalia
- fireworks
- pornographic images
- any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property.

Prior to a search being carried out, a pupil will always be asked to surrender any prohibited items. A pupil will also be asked to empty his/her own pockets, bag, and locker. We will always conduct a search in a professional and respectful manner. Where a search involves more than one pupil, they will be searched individually. A search **must** be conducted by two members of staff. Ideally, at least one member of staff will be of the same gender as the pupil being searched. Wherever possible, a senior member of staff should be present when a pupil is searched. It may be necessary to make physical contact with the pupil. Parents/carers will be informed if their child has been searched and the reasons for the search.

What happens if a pupil complains when force is used on them?

All complaints about the use of force will be thoroughly investigated by the head teacher or delegated senior member of staff. Where a member of staff has used reasonable force in line with this policy, this will provide a defence to any criminal prosecution or other civil or public law action. When a complaint is made, it is the responsibility of the person making the complaint to prove that his/her allegations are true – it is **not** for the member of staff to show that he/she has acted reasonably. The head teacher will consider carefully whether the circumstances of the case warrant a member of staff being suspended until the allegation is resolved or whether alternative arrangements are more appropriate.

What about other physical contact with pupils?

It is not illegal to touch a pupil. Staff at LSHS do not work within the parameters of a 'no contact' policy. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a pupil is proper and necessary. The following are some examples of where touching a pupil might be proper or necessary:

- When comforting a distressed pupil;
- When a pupil is being congratulated or praised;
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument;
- To demonstrate exercises or adjust techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching;
- To give first aid.

Physical contact with a pupil should always be proportionate and only occur when necessary.

Related policies:

- Behaviour (Rewards and Sanctions) Policy
- Managing medicines and First Aid Policy
- Safeguarding (incorporating Child Protection) Policy
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct (['Guidance for Safer Working Practices for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education Settings'](#) (May 2019)

Reference to Government Guidance:

- Use of reasonable force. Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies (July 2013). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools>