

Use of Reasonable Force Policy



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Introduction

The Veritas Multi-Academy Trust is committed to ensuring a safe and supportive environment for all students and staff. This policy outlines the use of reasonable force in our schools, based on the latest guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). It aims to provide clear procedures and standards for when and how reasonable force may be used to maintain order and safety.

Definitions

Reasonable Force: Any physical contact used to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a student to safety by the arm, to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or restraining a student to prevent violence or injury.

Control: Passive physical contact, such as standing between students or blocking a student's path.

Restraint: Active physical intervention to hold back physically or bring a student under control.

Legal Framework

This policy is informed by the following legal frameworks and guidance:

- *Education Act 1996*
- *Education and Inspections Act 2006*
- *DfE guidance: "Use of Reasonable Force" (2013)*
- *Human Rights Act 1998*
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023*

Links to other policies

Please also refer to:

- *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*
- *Behaviour Policy*
- *Complaints Policy*
- *Staff Code of Conduct*

Key Principles

All incidents of the use of reasonable force in school must be underpinned by the principle of minimum force, maximum care. All incidents of reasonable force being used in school must be deemed to be reasonable, proportionate and necessary.

Proportionality: The force used must be the minimum necessary to achieve the desired result.

Best Interests of the Child: Actions taken must always be in the best interests of the child, considering their safety and welfare.

Prevention: Reasonable force should only be used as a last resort after other de-escalation strategies have been attempted.

Circumstances for Use of Reasonable Force

The law states that reasonable force may be used in the following circumstances:

- *Prevent students from hurting themselves*
- *Prevent students from hurting others*
- *Prevent students from damaging property.*

- *Prevent students from causing disorder and/or breaking the law.*

In all instances the level of force used must be deemed 'reasonable, proportionate and necessary' based on a dynamic risk assessment of the situation by the adults involved.

'Reasonable force' covers a broad range of actions, used by most teachers at some point in their career, which involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.

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

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 two pupils are fighting and refuse to separate. This might include:
 - Holding a pupil back physically
 - Bringing a pupil under control

It is up to a staff member's professional judgement to decide whether to physically intervene. This decision should always depend on the individual circumstances and a dynamic risk assessment of the presenting circumstances.

Note that certain techniques are unacceptable

It is important to note that certain techniques that were previously deemed acceptable have now been classified as unsafe and unlawful. The following restraint techniques present an unacceptable risk when used on children, and must **not** be used:

- The 'seated double embrace' – 2 members of staff forcing an individual into a sitting position and leaning them forward, while a third monitors breathing
- The 'double basket-hold' – holding an individual's arms across their chest
- The 'nose distraction technique' – a sharp upward jab under the nose

Prohibited Actions

The following actions are prohibited under this policy:

- Use of force as a form of punishment.
- Any force that could foreseeably cause injury, including hitting, kicking, slapping, punching, or the use of any object.
- Forcing a student to the ground except in extreme situations where there is an immediate risk to safety.
 - Lifting or carrying a student or removing them from height / raised position

Action after an incident

The headteacher will ensure that each incident is reviewed and investigated further if required. If further action is required in relation to a member of staff or a pupil, this will be pursued through the appropriate procedure.

Pupils with SEND

When using 'reasonable force' in response to risks presented by incidents involving children with SEND, or with medical conditions, staff should in considering the risks carefully recognise the additional vulnerability of these groups.

They should also consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010, for example in relation to making reasonable adjustments and their Public Sector Equality Duty. By planning positive and proactive behaviour support, for instance through drawing up individual pastoral support plans alongside positive handling plans and individual risk assessments for more vulnerable children, and agreeing them with parents and carers, staff can reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviour and the need to use 'reasonable force'.

Staff Training and Support

Veritas Multi-Academy Trust provides three layers of training and support for staff to ensure that individual Trust and school policies, procedures and actions are safe, effective and provide the very best care for our pupils.

Universal Training (All Staff)

All staff within each school must receive regular and ongoing training based on the principles of their school's 'Behaviour Policy' and this 'Use of Reasonable Force' policy. As part of this training, all staff routinely working with children will understand the reasons why reasonable force may sometimes be needed to be used and will be trained in a range of de-escalation strategies in order to minimise the risk. The focus of this training must be on developing the full understanding of each school's behaviour policy. The default expectation should be that staff do not routinely carry out the use of reasonable force within their role – unless the situation is deemed to be an emergency. Each school's behaviour policy will be revisited with all staff each year. As part of this training, all staff members will demonstrate understanding of the school's policy on the use of reasonable force - specifically including de-escalation techniques.



Enhanced Training (Senior Staff)

All members of each school's senior leadership team must undertake regular, accredited training on the use of reasonable force (Equivalent to Team Teach – Level One). This training can be carried out online and will cover updates to current legislation, de-escalation training and practical advice linked to current statutory guidance for schools.



Targeted Training (Specific Staff)

Any staff members who are key adults supporting children who routinely require reasonable force to be used will attend specific, accredited face to face training (equivalent to Team Teach Level 2) to ensure that they have the skills and training needed to keep themselves and the children in their care safe. The pupils supported by these staff members must have Positive Handling Plans and Risk Assessments in place.

Reporting and Recording Incidents

- Any incident involving the use of reasonable force must be reported immediately to the headteacher, or in their absence the deputy headteacher.
- A detailed written report must be completed on 'MyConcern' as soon as possible, including the context of the incident, the actions taken, and the outcome.
- Parents/carers of the students involved will be informed about the incident on the same day or as soon as practically possible.

- When triaged by a DSL, the reported concern must be flagged as a “**Physical Intervention by Staff**” in order to correctly label the concern category.
- It is an essential that all incidents are recorded with 24 hours and ideally on the same day. Incidents must be recorded by the adult using reasonable force. Any supporting adult must make his or her own record on My Concern separately
- Incidents of the use of reasonable force will be retained by the school/Trust for a period of 75 years in-line with current legislation.

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Trust's safeguarding lead – involving Headteachers, DSLs and local academy governors as needed. Incident reports will be monitored regularly to identify patterns and to inform future training and policy updates.

Complaints and Allegations

Any complaints about the use of force will be handled in accordance with the Trust's complaints policy. Where allegations of harm are made, the headteacher / DSL will consult with the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) and make a referral if needed if this is deemed to be necessary. Allegations of misconduct will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly in line with the Trust's safeguarding and disciplinary procedures.

The use of reasonable force is a critical aspect of ensuring safety and maintaining an orderly environment in schools. Veritas Multi-Academy Trust is committed to ensuring that any use of force is conducted in a manner that is lawful, reasonable, proportionate and necessary.