



DISCOVERY
EDUCATIONAL TRUST

Use of Reasonable Force Policy

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1. Introduction

The Discovery Educational Trust (DET) Trust Board (TB), Local School Committees (LSC) and all staff recognise that Schools and their staff are an important part of the wider safeguarding system for children. This system is described in various pieces of statutory guidance and, accordingly, this Policy has regard to [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(KCSiE\) \(2022\)](#), [Working Together to Safeguard Children, Searching, screening and confiscation - advice for schools](#) (July 2022), [Behaviour in Schools – Advice for headteachers and school staff](#) (September 2022) and [“Use of reasonable force - advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies”](#) (July 2013). Using reasonable force appropriately is an important way to ensure that pupil and staff welfare is protected, and helps Schools to establish an environment where everyone is safe.

This Policy considers the DfE guidance [“Use of reasonable force - Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies”](#) (July 2013), and should be read in conjunction with the School Behaviour Policy, the School Anti-Bullying Policy, the DET Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy and the DET Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

This Policy applies to all pupils at DET Schools, including Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Sixth Form, and to all staff working at the Schools. Care and consideration of the child’s age is given when following the guidance in this Policy. DET and its Schools acknowledge their legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

For these purposes, “staff” is defined as any person working at the School, whether under a contract of employment, contract for services or otherwise than under a contract whether paid or unpaid, whatever their position, role, or responsibilities. Staff includes (but is not limited to) teachers, contractors (including peripatetic teachers), teaching assistants and support, coaches, part-time staff, graduate/language assistants, sports coaches, all Associate/Support Staff, temporary supply, agency staff and casual workers, exam invigilators, work experience students and volunteers.

2. Reasonable Force

The term “reasonable force” covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involves 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.

As previously referenced, schools generally use force 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.

DET School staff 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.

Parental consent is not required to use reasonable force on a pupil.

3. Who Can Use Reasonable Force?

All members of DET/School staff have a legal power to use reasonable force (Education and Inspections Act 2006, Section 93).

This power also applies to people, who the Headteacher (HT) has temporarily put in charge of pupils, for example, unpaid volunteers or parents/carers accompanying pupils on an educational visit.

4. When Can Reasonable Force Be Used?

Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.

Before intervening physically, and wherever practicable, staff must tell the pupil to stop, and what will happen if they do not. Members of staff must continue to attempt to communicate with the pupil throughout the incident, and make it clear that reasonable force/physical contact/restraint will stop as soon as it is no longer necessary. In such cases, only the minimum force necessary is used, whilst maintaining a calm and measured approach.

The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned, and always depends on the individual circumstances.

Staff should never put themselves at risk of injury. In these circumstances, the member of staff must remove other pupils, who may be at risk, seek assistance from a colleague(s), and telephone Reception to request support from a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

In extreme circumstances, staff may feel that it is necessary to call the police. Staff inform the pupil(s) that they have sent for help. Until assistance arrives, staff continue to attempt to defuse the situation verbally, and try to prevent the situation from escalating.

DET School staff use force for two main purposes – to control pupils or to restrain them.

The following list is not exhaustive, but serves to provide examples of where reasonable force can and cannot be used.

Schools can use reasonable force to:

- remove disruptive pupils from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so, i.e. where behaviour endangers the safety of others;
- prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a School event or a School trip or visit, i.e. where behaviour endangers the safety of others;
- 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 to separate pupils found fighting;
- restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

Schools cannot use reasonable force:

- as a punishment, which is always unlawful.

5. Application of Force

Physical intervention can take several forms. It might involve staff:

- physically interposing between pupils;
- blocking a pupil's path;
- holding;
- pushing;
- pulling;
- leading a pupil by the hand or arm;
- shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back; or (in extreme circumstances
- using more restrictive holds.

In exceptional circumstances, where there is an immediate risk of injury, a member of staff may need to take any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of “reasonable force”, for example, to prevent a young pupil running off a pavement onto a busy road, or to prevent a pupil hitting someone, or throwing something.

In other circumstances, staff must not act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example, by:

- Holding a pupil by the neck or collar, or in a way that may restrict their ability to breathe;
- Slapping, punching, or kicking the pupil;
- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint;
- Tripping up a pupil;
- Holding or pulling a pupil by the hair or ear;
- Contact with sexually sensitive areas;
- Holding a pupil face down on the ground.

In accordance with the Physical Control in Care Medical Panel 2008, which identified that certain restraint techniques present an unacceptable risk when used on children and young people, the following techniques must not be used by staff:

- The “seated double embrace”, which involves two members of staff forcing a person into a sitting position and leaning them forward, while a third person monitors breathing;
- The “double basket-hold”, which involves holding a person’s arms across their chest;
- The “nose distraction technique”, which involves a sharp, upward jab under the nose.

6. Staff Training

The HTs ensure that all members of staff are appropriately trained in the use of reasonable force.

7. Informing Parents/Carers and Dealing with Complaints

DET and its Schools inform parents/carers about serious incidents involving the use of force.

Complaints about the use of force are dealt with through DET’s Complaints Policy and Procedure, which is found on each School’s website, and is available from the Schools on request.

8. Physical Contact with Pupils

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils, for example, demonstrating exercises or techniques in sport or music tuition, during drama or PE, comforting a distressed pupil, congratulating a pupil, providing first aid, or where pupils with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) need more physical contact to assist their everyday learning).

However, it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. Staff should, therefore, always use their professional judgement. Staff must not have unnecessary physical contact with pupils, and must be alert to minor forms of friendly physical contact being misconstrued by pupils or onlookers.

Where exercises or procedures need to be demonstrated, extreme caution must be used if the demonstration involves contact with pupils and, wherever possible, contact should be avoided. It is acknowledged that some staff, for example, those who teach PE and games, or who offer music tuition, do, on occasions, have to initiate physical contact with pupils in order to support a pupil to enable them to perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument or to assist them with an exercise. This should be done with the pupil's agreement.

Contact under these circumstances must be for the minimum time necessary to complete the activity, and take place in an open environment. Staff must explain the intended action to the pupil and remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the child.

A member of staff can never take the place of a parent/carers in providing physical comfort, and must be cautious of any demonstration of affection. In instances of pupil distress,

support, agency and supply staff, contractors and volunteers must, wherever possible, seek the assistance of a member of the teaching staff or one of the School Nurses, rather than become involved themselves. If a member of Associate/Support Staff or volunteer has helped a pupil in distress, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (or Deputy DSL in their absence) must be informed.

First aid, personal and/or intimate care (removing wet clothes or toileting in lower years) must only be administered by trained staff, and they must adhere to the School's policies on administering first aid/medication and intimate care, and the reporting requirements. They should explain to the pupil what is happening, and ensure that another member of staff is present or aware of the action being taken.

Pupils are entitled to privacy when changing or showering, although there must be an appropriate level of supervision to ensure safety. Staff must announce themselves when entering changing rooms, and avoid remaining, unless required.

Physical contact must never be secretive, or for the gratification of the member of staff, or represent a misuse of authority. If a member of staff believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances must be recorded as soon as possible, the DSL informed and, if appropriate, a copy of the report placed on the pupil's file.

9. Record Keeping

Any incident involving the use of reasonable force by a member of staff must be recorded in the Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS).

All records created in accordance with this Policy are managed in accordance with the DET Data Protection Policy and Retention Schedules. Records created in accordance with this Policy may contain personal data. DET and its Schools use Privacy Notices to explain how personal data of pupils and parents/carers is processed and these are available via the Schools' websites. Staff must follow the DET Data Protection Policy when handling personal data in connection with this Policy.