



REASONABLE FORCE & RESTRAINT POLICY 2023-2024

Effective Date:

Last Reviewed: June 2023

Reviewed by: Karen Hayward, Executive Principal

Next Review Date: June 2024

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Aims

- To create a learning environment in which young people and adults feel safe.
- To protect every person in the school community from harm
- To protect all students against any form of physical intervention that is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful.
- To put in place guidance for staff so that they are clear about the circumstances in which they might use reasonable force to restrain students and how such reasonable force might be applied.

Definition of Reasonable Force

The Education (NI) Order 1998 (Part II Article 4 (1)) states:

‘A member of the staff of a grant-aided School may use, in relation to any student at the school, such force as is reasonable in the circumstances for the purpose of preventing the student from doing (or continuing to do) any of the following, namely:

- committing an offence
- causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the student him/herself) or
- engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline across Greensand Federation or among any of its students, whether that behaviour occurs during a teaching session or otherwise.’

Based on this legal framework, our ‘working’ definition of ‘reasonable force’ is the minimum force necessary to prevent a student from physically harming him/herself or other or seriously damaging property but used in a manner which attempt to preserve the dignity of all concerned. The use of reasonable force will always depend on the circumstances of the case and staff should take the following into consideration:

Is it Reasonable to use Force?

What degree of force could reasonably be employed, given the age, sex, physical strength, size, understanding, medical conditions and any special educational needs of the student.

- Staff should 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 student.
- The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it. The use of any degree of force is unlawful if the particular circumstances do not warrant the use of physical force. Therefore, physical force could not be justified to prevent a student from committing a trivial misdemeanor, or in a situation that clearly could be resolved without force.
- The degree of force employed should be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or the consequences it is intended to prevent. Any force used should always be the minimum needed to diffuse the situation.

When might it be appropriate to use Reasonable Force?

Reasonable force should be limited to EMERGENCY SITUATIONS and used only as a last resort in situations where:

- A student attacks a member of staff, or another student;
- Students are fighting
- A student is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous material, substances or objects;
- A student attempts to abscond from school (NB this will only apply if a student could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school and will be applied appropriate to age and individual special educational need – older children without SEN issues who attempt to abscond from premises should be reported to police and not restrained).

5 Prevention should be the Primary Consideration

Steps to avoid these situations should be taken and the adult should be able to demonstrate that those steps were taken. Physical restraint should always be the last resort.

Staff have a responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of their students. They are in a particular position of trust (Duty of Care).

The following should be applied in all cases:

- Staff should delay if at all possible. (However, in some circumstances e.g., a child about to run out into the road, it will be necessary to act quickly.)
- An 'on the spot' risk assessment for each occasion that you feel reasonable force or restraint may be necessary should be made.
- Consideration should be given to the environment, the medical circumstances, and the clothing.
- Action being taken should always be for the good of the child, trying to keep them safe.
- Assure the child that the restraint is not a punishment.
- Never use other children in the restraint.
- Restraint or reasonable force should be witnessed by another responsible adult. Staff should call for another adult if restraint or reasonable force is needed.
- An immediate account of the incident and the steps taken to prevent and deal with it must be made to the Executive Principal. A written report of the incident and action taken should be entered into the Physical Restraint book, signed by the person using restraint/reasonable force and the witness and logged with the Executive Principal. The incident should be followed up with time for the adult and child to talk about the situation.

6 Reasonable Force might be used:

- In self-defence, where risk of injury is imminent
- When there is developing risk of injury to the person deemed in need of restraint or others
- Physical intervention in these circumstances may take several forms, e.g.:
 - physically interposing between students
 - blocking a students' path
 - holding

- leading a student by the hand or arm
- shepherding a student away by placing a hand in the centre of the back; or (in extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds