

St Bede's Catholic College



Policy on the Use of Physical Contact with Pupils

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Within St Bede's, teaching staff, Learning Support Assistants, Librarian, Technicians, when in lesson, School Meals Supervisory Assistants and First Aiders are authorised by the Principal to have control or charge of pupils in exercising their separate roles within the school.

A member of staff who may have to intervene physically with a pupil needs to understand clearly the options and strategies open to him/her. A member of staff must not hesitate to act in an emergency provided they follow these guidelines.

Reasonable force:

1. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.
2. 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 student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.
3. 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
4. Schools may 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.
5. 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.
6. School 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 pupil.

Rationale

A member of staff may use appropriate reasonable force to prevent a pupil from:

- a. Committing a criminal offence (or, for a pupil under the age of criminal responsibility, what would be an offence for an older pupil);
- b. Causing personal injury or damage to property; or
- c. Prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the college or among any pupils receiving education at the college, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Section 93 of the Education & Inspection Act 2006.

Reasonable force may therefore be appropriate in the following circumstances

A pupil who:

- attacks a member of staff or another pupil
- is fighting
- is engaged in, or is visibly on the verge of committing deliberate damage or vandalism to property
- is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play or by the misuse of dangerous materials or objects
- is running in a corridor/stairway in a way in which he or she might have, or cause an accident likely to injure him/herself or others
- absconds from a class/office or tries to leave college and that pupil is likely to be at risk of harming themselves or others
- refuses to leave the room on request*

- behaves in a way which compromises the safety of other pupils
- who is being disruptive and when they have refused to follow an instruction to leave the room
- behaves in a way that disrupts a college event or educational visit

*If a child refuses to leave a room on request, it may ultimately be more appropriate to re-locate all other pupils to another space.

Physical intervention might involve staff:

- physically positioning oneself between pupils
- blocking a pupil's path
- holding
- pushing
- pulling
- leading a pupil by the hand or arm
- shepherding a pupil away
- using more restrictive holds in extreme circumstances.

The level and duration of the restraint will always be the minimum necessary to restore safety. Stay calm and send for help.

Physical intervention should not intentionally cause injury and, therefore, the following procedures should not be used:

- holding a pupil around the neck or by the collar or in any way which restricts the pupil's ability to breathe
- slapping, punching or kicking a pupil
- twisting or forcing limbs against a joint
- tripping up a pupil
- holding or pulling a pupil by the hair/ear
- holding a pupil's face down on the ground
- touching or holding a pupil in such a way that might be considered indecent.

Do not put yourself at risk if a pupil has a weapon. Do not lose your temper or allow the situation to get out of control.

Power to search pupils without consent

In addition to the general power to use reasonable force, the Principal and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for the following "prohibited items":¹

- knives and weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- stolen items
- tobacco, cigarette papers and vaping products
- 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.

Force cannot be used to search for items banned under the school rules. ¹ Section 550ZB (5) of the Education Act 1996

Recording any incident

Following an intervention, this procedure must be followed by staff.

- Inform the Principal/Vice Principal
- A contemporaneous account must be written which should include:
 - the name of the pupil/pupils involved
 - date, time and where the incident took place
 - names of any witnesses to the incident staff and/or pupils
 - the reason that force was necessary (see previous page)
 - full details of the incident as it developed including pupil's behaviour, what was said, steps taken to diffuse or calm situation
 - the degree of force used, how it was applied and for how long
 - the pupil's response and the outcome of the incident
 - details of any injury suffered by anyone involved in the incident
- The incident must be recorded in the Incident Book by either the Principal or Vice Principal
- Written witness statements taken immediately and in such a way as to avoid collusion.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct which is the policy for good order and conduct within the college.

November 2018

References:

- The Use of Reasonable Force DfE Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies, July 2013
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, July 2018