

# Woodlands Primary School

## The Use of Reasonable Force



Written by	Rita Tarrant-Blick
Ratified by Governors	Spring 2022
Date for Review	Spring 2025
Signed – Chair of Governors	
Signed – Headteacher	
Is this an internal or external policy?	Internal
Is this based on a model policy?	No

This policy has been impact assessed by Rita Tarrant-Blick in order to ensure that it does not have an adverse affect on race, gender or disability equality

## **Introduction:**

Woodlands Primary School is committed to maintaining the safety of students and staff. Situations involving decisions about whether to use force can occur in school. This policy seeks to establish clear guidelines on the use of force by staff and serves as an important part in minimising risks associated with choosing to use or not use force.

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/section/93>) enables school staff to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a student from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- a. committing any criminal offence
- b. causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the student him/herself)
- c. prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any students receiving education at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

## **Objectives:**

This policy seeks to:

- Ensure the safety of students and staff
- Prevent serious breaches of school discipline
- Prevent serious injury to staff and/or students
- Provide guidelines to staff when faced with situations that may require the use of force

## **Minimising the use of force:**

The following principles should help to minimise the need to use force:

- The school environment is calm and ordered.
- There are appropriate levels of supervision, including at break and lunchtimes
- De-escalation is used wherever possible.
- Appropriate risk assessments and behaviour support plans for individual students are in place.
- Force is only used where the member of staff considers that the risks involved in doing so are outweighed by the risks involved in not using force.

## What is reasonable force?

- The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions 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 student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.
- 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
- 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.
- 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.

## Staff Authorisation

### *Permanent authorisation:*

All teachers and support staff who have control or charge of students automatically have the statutory power to use force. This includes teachers, teaching assistants and student welfare staff.

*Temporary authorisation:* may be issued by the Headteacher to other members of staff involved in supervising students, e.g. site staff, office staff or volunteers. Any such authorisation will be given in advance and will be time limited – for example on a school trip. It is not expected that volunteers would have sole charge of pupils with a behaviour plan or risk assessment – but volunteers may need to exercise force to prevent an accident. This is legal and expected.

## Deciding whether to use force.

Force may be considered when:

- There is a need to prevent injury to another student and/or member of staff or to the student themselves
- A student fails to comply with a reasonable instruction to stop an action that is potentially dangerous to themselves or others
- A student's actions place in jeopardy the health and safety of others
- A student's behaviour seriously prejudices good order and discipline in the school

Members of staff should use the following guidelines to decide whether or not force should be used in particular circumstances:

- The potential consequences of not intervening were sufficiently serious to justify considering using force.
- The chances of achieving the desired result by other means were judged to be low.
- The risk associated with not using force outweighs those of using force.
- There was identifiable risk to other students and/or members of staff and/or school property.

Proper account should be made of any particular Special Education Need and/or disability that a student may have.

It is worth noting, however, that decisions often need to be made quickly and that the professional judgement of the member of staff involved is key.

Staff should seek to minimise the most serious risks, for example calling the police for assistance if necessary and ensure that any force used is reasonable and proportionate.

#### **Using force:**

- It is important to use the minimum force necessary to achieve the desired result. It is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.
- A clear verbal warning should be given to the student that force may have to be used.
- Restraint that is likely to injure a student (particularly anything that could constrict breathing) should only be used in extreme cases or where there was no viable alternative. The following restraint techniques are NOT permitted: the 'seated double embrace', the 'double basket hold' and the 'nose distraction technique'
- Wherever possible force should not be used unless there is another responsible adult present to support, observe and call for assistance.

#### **The types of force used could include:**

- a. Passive physical contact resulting from standing between students or blocking students
- b. Active physical contact such as:
  - i) leading a student by the hand or arm
  - ii) ushering a student away by placing a hand in the centre of the back
  - iii) in more extreme cases using appropriate physical restraint

Where there is a high and immediate risk of death or serious injury, a member of staff is justified in taking any necessary action (consistent with seeking to use the minimum force required to achieve the desired result) e.g., preventing a student running into a busy road or preventing a student hitting someone with a dangerous object such as a hammer or glass bottle.

Staff should make every effort to avoid acting in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury. However, it may not always be possible to avoid injuring a student.

Staff should avoid touching or restraining a pupil in a way that could be interpreted as sexually inappropriate conduct.

*Examples of situations that call for judgements of this kind might include:*

- A student attacking a member of staff, or another student
- Students fighting
- A student deliberately damaging property
- A student causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, rough play, or by misuse of materials or objects
- A student persistently refusing to follow an instruction to leave a classroom
- A student behaving in a way that seriously disrupts a lesson, school event or visit
- A student placing him/herself at risk by absconding from school

In these examples the use of force would be reasonable if the behaviour was sufficiently dangerous or disruptive to warrant physical intervention and could not realistically be dealt with by other means.

### **Recording incidents**

Annex A should be used to record details of any incidents requiring the use of force. This should be completed as soon as is practically possible after the incident and handed to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

### **Complaints**

All complaints made relating to the use of force will be dealt with according to the school's complaints procedure. Allegations about a member of staff will follow Kent County Council guidelines.

### **Training**

All teaching staff will receive regular training as part of INSET provision on the appropriate use of force. Identified staff will also have additional training in types of restraint.

### Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher and members of the Leadership Team will monitor the use of this policy on a day to day basis. Periodic reports will be made to the Governing Body about the use and implementation of this policy.

The policy is subject to regular review, according to the cycle of policy review determined by the Governing Body.

### Equal Opportunities:

The governors and staff are committed to providing the full range of opportunities for all pupils, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, social, cultural or religious background. All pupils have access to the curriculum, and the right to a learning environment, which dispels ignorance, prejudice or stereotyping.

Document History	
Date	Summary of changes
Spring 2019	Policy written
Spring 2022	Reviewed - no material changes. Small format changes and wording updated to improve clarity.

### Use of Force to Control or Restrain Pupils: Incident Record

Details of pupil or pupils on whom force was used by a member of staff (name, class)	
Date, time and location of incident	
Details of other pupils involved (directly or as witnesses), including whether any of the pupils involved were vulnerable for SEN, disability, medical or social reasons.	
Description of incident by the staff involved, including any attempts to de-escalate and warnings given that force might be used.	
Reason for using force and description of force used.	
Any injury suffered by staff or pupils or any first aid and/or medical attention required.	
Reasons for making a record of the incident.	
Follow up, including post-incident support and any disciplinary action against pupils.	
Any information about the incident shared with staff not involved in it and external agencies.	
When and how those with parental responsibilities were informed about the incident and any views they have expressed.	
Has any complaint been lodged (details should not be recorded here)?	
Report compiled by:	Report countersigned by:
Name and role:	Name and role:
Signature:	Signature:
Date:	Date: