

The Ark Federation

POLICY ON THE USE OF FORCE TO CONTROL OR RESTRAIN PUPILS



This policy was adopted by the Teaching & Learning Committee of the Ark Federation Governing Body at the meeting on 27 January 2016. It will be reviewed in January 2018.

Signed.....
(Mrs G McMenemy, Chair of Teaching and Learning committee)

The aim of this policy is to ensure that the welfare of pupils and staff remain central to the ethos of The Ark Federation

The school believes that to deny pupils all physical contact with adults is to deny a basic human need and an expression of care and concern for all pupils.

However physical contact must be appropriate for the age, understanding and sex of the child and must never threaten or be sexually inappropriate.

Staff must be sensitive to:

- cultural backgrounds
- the need to maintain pupils' personal space
- be aware of pupils who have been sexually abused and will either seek physical contact or positively avoid it. Staff will be made aware by the safeguarding officer when appropriate

Physical contact may be appropriate

- when a pupil needs to get comfort or reassurance e.g. following an accident or personal crisis.
- when a pupil needs encouragement to attempt a new challenge e.g. to climb on to a piece of apparatus.
- when there is a need to take urgent action to avoid an incident or injury

However staff should take extreme care when offering physical comfort to pupils of the opposite sex, particularly as they approach puberty because physical contact can be misconstrued and this can cause distress to all concerned.

Staff should not be alone with pupils except in exceptional circumstances. Classroom doors should be left open when one member of staff is left supervising/talking with/teaching small groups or individual pupils.

The Use of Force to Control or Restrain Pupils

This policy should be read in conjunction with DfEE Circular 10/98 and takes into account Education Acts 1996 and 1997 which state reasonable force and restraint may be used to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do any of the following:

- committing a criminal offence
- injuring themselves or others
- causing damage to property including the pupil's own property
- engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order at the school or among any of its pupils whether that behaviour occurs in a classroom during a teaching session or elsewhere

Policy Statement

Guidelines on the use of force to control or restrain pupils are part of the school's discipline and behaviour policy. Restraint will not be used punitively. The school has a disciplinary approach based on positive reinforcement of acceptable behaviour.

All school staff are familiar with the school's policy and have a clear understanding about when physical restraint is appropriate and how it should be done. They must also know when and how to get support from other staff .

Physical restraint may be used by those staff who have attended the Team-Teach Positive Handling training.

Details of the training programme will be recorded. Authorised staff will sign an undertaking that they understand the criteria when physical restraint should be used and the procedures for recording all such incidents.

Staff have a right to defend themselves against physical attack, and do everything possible to diffuse the situation before such an attack occurs. In the event that it is necessary to defend themselves against physical attack minimum force for maximum effect should be used. Parents will be informed of the action the school intends to take should the need arise.

Risk Assessment

- all staff including teachers, classroom assistants and other colleagues in the school must be informed about pupils/families who are vulnerable or volatile
- vulnerable or volatile pupils/families should be clearly identified in documentation
- a risk assessment based on knowledge and previous experience will be carried out and a plan of action for individuals will be written by the Headteacher or delegated member of staff.

Action

Situations in which reasonable force might be appropriate are:

- i. When action is necessary in self-defence e.g. when the pupil attacks another pupil or adult
- ii. Where there is an immediate or imminent risk of injury to another child or an adult e.g. when pupils are fighting or there is rough play or misuse of dangerous materials or objects.
- iii. Where there is immediate risk of significant damage to property – when a pupil is about to vandalise property
- iv. Where behaviour jeopardises good order and discipline e.g. where a pupil absconds from the classroom or school buildings. (Note – this only applies if the pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school)
- v A pupil persistently refuses to leave an area e.g. the classroom or a playground etc.
- vi Behaviour which seriously disrupts a lesson.

Physical intervention may need to be used when

- i. There is clearly no alternative approach which would work in the circumstances i.e. there is an immediate urgency to resolve the situation
- ii. Defending or protecting

Procedure

- i Staff must use minimum force for maximum effect over the shortest time and use only the agreed restraint methods
- ii Pupil safety is paramount. Staff must be aware of signs of distress such as vomiting, changes in colour, breathlessness etc.
- iii After an incident staff must complete the "Report of Incident Involving Physical Restraint". One copy is to be placed in the staff incident file and the top copy must be passed to the Headteacher (or other member of the Senior Management Team with delegated responsibility)
- iv Parents must be informed on the same day as the incident, of the circumstances which led up to the incident and the outcome. Parents must also be informed of any future action the school intends to take.
- v. The senior management team and staff will evaluate any incident or physical restraint to inform future management of pupils in similar situations. (Written plan of action for future management)
- vi Staff involved will be debriefed following an incident and kept informed of any future action which relates to it.
- vii A report on the operation of this policy will be made by the Headteacher to the full Governing Body if there is an incident. The Chair of Governors will be informed on the day of an occurrence.

Essential Points to Remember

Whenever possible staff are advised to seek the support of another adult when they need to use reasonable force to resolve a situation they cannot deal with in any other way. The other adult will be a witness to the incident and will complete a witness report for the record.

In some extreme cases staff are advised not to intervene in an incident, unless it is an emergency. Staff must judge whether it is safe to remove other pupils to a safe distance and seek help from other colleagues or the police. In such incidents, the teacher/member of staff should tell the pupil that he/she has sent for help and continue to try to diffuse the situation orally. If the situation is diffused successfully the incident log must still be completed so that others may learn from the experience.

Complaints

In the event of complaints to the school or to Social Services in connection with the use of force by a member of staff, the Headteacher (or delegated member of the senior management team) will seek the advice and support of personnel on how to respond to the complaint.

Application of Force

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

- physically interposing between pupils
- blocking pupil's path
- holding
- pushing but only in extreme circumstances to avoid danger
- leading a pupil by the hand or arm
- shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back or (using the techniques taught by Team Teach)
- **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 from running onto a busy road, or to prevent a pupil from hitting someone or throwing something.

In other circumstances staff should not act in a way that might be expected to cause injury.

Staff should always avoid touching or holding a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent.

Staff must always consider whether a risk is urgent and whether there is any alternative to physical intervention.

Staff should always try to deal with the situation using other agreed strategies to calm a situation before using force. See advice in the Federation behaviour policy.
