

Reasonable Force – Restraint Policy

Rationale:

This policy is to provide our school with guidance on the circumstances in which physical restraint may be appropriately used, procedures which should be in place and the techniques which are considered to be suitable. It is vitally important that staff, pupils and parents understand these procedures and the context in which they apply.

It is intended to ensure that staff are clear about their role when they are working with children in order that both their own rights and those of children are protected.

The Education Act 1997 has placed greater emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of schools for the promotion of good behaviour and discipline. This includes a section on the power of members of staff to restrain pupils and the policy also needs, therefore, to be considered in this broader context. The LA acknowledges that there is a fine line to be drawn between advice which will be helpful to clarify where reasonable force might be used as the last resort, and advice which may precipitate violent reactions in pupils. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that this line is clearly understood and that reasonable force or restraint is only used as a last resort.

This policy sets out the framework for the use of physical restraints in a general sense while recognising that there are circumstances that will require more particular approaches. Any use of physical restraints, however, should always be set within the guidance of an overall behaviour management framework.

Successful inclusion of more young people in mainstream settings increases the need to assist all staff in preserving good order and discipline within an environment conducive to meeting the needs of all young people.

At the same time, the risk of accusation of improper conduct towards a young person needs to be minimised in order that the staff may act appropriately in difficult circumstances. The guidelines support the need for physical restraint but as only one of the strategies available for the management of challenging behaviour.

Legislation that came into force on 1st September 1998 (Section 550A of the Education Act 1996), together with national guidance (DfEE Circular 10/98), establishes the powers of teachers and other staff who have lawful control or charge of pupils, to use reasonable force in order to prevent children committing a crime, causing injury or damage, or causing disruption.

Restraint is an action of last resort and is not a substitute for behaviour management strategies.

DEFINITION OF PHYSICAL RESTRAINT

In this document we define physical restraint as any method of responding to the challenging behaviour of pupils that threatens their personal safety, or the safety of others, where some degree of physical force is applied against the pupil's resistance to controlling his or her own behaviour by limiting or restricting his or her movement or mobility.

Aims & Objectives:

At the Sacred Heart School we aim to:

- ◆ protect all children from risk of harm to themselves or others
- ◆ protect all staff from risk of harm
- ◆ protect all staff from risk of allegation of improper use of physical restraint

Organisation:

This policy concerns circumstances when it is appropriate to use minimum physical force to prevent pupils moving into serious danger. Initially the warning should be verbal but physical restraint may be appropriate particularly when a pupil may not be capable of understanding danger.

Restraint is therefore qualitatively different from other forms of physical contact, such as manual prompting, physical guidance or other contact which might have an appropriate place within the context of particular teaching approaches, for example where staff are working with pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties.

It should be remembered that the failure to intervene, or lack of restraint, at an early stage of the challenging behaviour can produce situations where control is lost and damage, both emotional and physical, might occur to both young person and member of staff.

Physical restraint, however, should only be used as a last resort and never as a matter of course. It should never be used as a sanction or punishment. It can be used only in an emergency when there seems to be a real possibility that significant harm would occur if restraint is withheld. DfEE Circular 10/98 sets out the conditions within which a teacher, or another person authorised by the Head teacher:

*"....**may** use such force as is reasonable in all the circumstances to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do any of the following:*

- ◆ *Committing a criminal offence (including behaving in a way that would be an offence if the pupil were not under the age of criminal responsibility);*
- ◆ *Causing damage to property (including the pupil's own property);*
- ◆ *Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to maintaining good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils, whether that behaviour occurs in a classroom during a teaching session or elsewhere."*

EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES

The needs of children and young people who present emotional and behavioural difficulties pose a range of challenges.

At one end of the spectrum of need are young people who behave in ways that are considered disruptive. They may display behaviour that is socially inappropriate and in some instances is dangerous.

There is a qualitative difference between deliberately disruptive behaviour and impulsive behaviour arising from emotional/psychological disturbance - such as self-harm.

Both sorts of behaviour raise concerns because of the possible increase of risk of injury to the young persons or their educators/carers or to other children. Instances where pupils have a total disregard for the safety of themselves or others (such as deliberately pushing their hands through window glass, throwing items at others, self-injury or deliberately wandering across a busy road) present circumstances where there may be no alternative other than to restrict the young person's range of movement by reasonable force.

Such young people often have difficulties in appreciating or understanding the consequences of their actions or their environment. Some young people, as a result of their own insecurity, will test the limits of acceptable behaviour by adopting extremes of emotional or physical behaviour.

SEVERE LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

At another extreme, young people and children with severe learning difficulties or communication difficulties present another set of challenges. They may lack self-motivation and self-care skills, which invariably requires staff to physically prompt, encourage or guide them to participate in activities which other young people would join in naturally.

For such pupils, challenging behaviour may be a response to a particular situation that is disturbing to them. It may be an act of frustration as a result of being unable to express something or do something. In many cases it will be of a very individual nature, such that the particular triggers or circumstances are entirely unique to that individual. Physical restraints for this behaviour may need to be related much more closely to an individual plan designed specifically for each individual.

The complexity, range of need and the consequent support for the young person is such that physical intervention is the norm, not the exception.

PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE

Irrespective of whether incidents occur during work with individuals or groups of young persons, early emphasis should be on managing the incident through non-physical, non-threatening, aggression-free strategies. Only in the event of the failure of clearly defined protocols to bring control to the situation, or imminent danger to persons, should physical restraint be considered.

Strategies which inform young people of their behaviour, offering alternative outcomes, should be developed over time so that they become an integral part of the behaviour of adults providing support.

The annual review of statements/EHC plans for pupils with special needs will be a time to address issues of challenging behaviour and identify planned approaches for individual young people.

Those young people who exhibit challenging behaviour but are not statemented should be identified and have an individual behaviour plan (IBP), which also addresses these issues.

Monitoring & Evaluation:

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored by the SLT through

- ◆ recording of all incidents involving use of physical restraint
- ◆ complaints by children, parents or staff

The success of our policy will be evaluated annually at the staff meeting on Child Protection Procedures and any necessary changes will be adopted.

Initial date of policy: October 2002
Policy last reviewed: July 2018

It is the intention to review this policy annually.