



Ashfield Girls' High School



“Each different. Each talented. All valued.”

Use of Reasonable Force Policy

Author:	Mrs B Cripps Vice-Principal (Pastoral)
Adopted Date:	March 2022
Review Date:	March 2024



Use of Reasonable Force Policy



Introduction

Ashfield Girls' High School believes that every pupil must be supported to achieve her true potential and can only do so in the following circumstances, where:

- Each pupil has the right to be educated in a safe and secure environment
- Parents and carers are informed and reassured that their children are being educated in a safe, caring and respectful atmosphere
- All staff have the right to work in a safe and secure environment

The school seeks to create such a learning environment in keeping with the ethos of the school and to protect all people in its community from harm.

All Senior Leaders, the Pastoral Team, Special Educational Needs Coordinator and Assistant Special Educational Needs Coordinator are authorised by the Principal to use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from:

- Committing an offence or engaging in conduct that could be an offence
- Causing personal injury to or damage to the property of herself or another person
- Causing disorder in school or engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to good discipline or when a pupil is in the charge of staff (e.g. on a school trip)

All staff (including those temporarily in charge of pupils) are authorised in an emergency to use reasonable force to prevent anyone causing personal injury to or damage to the property of herself or another person.

The right to use such reasonable force applies only on school premises or on school trips or other out of school authorised activities, sporting events or educational visits or whilst pupils are within the local community before and after the school day.

Definition

The use of force can be regarded as "reasonable" only if:

- The circumstances of the particular incident warrant it
- The degree of force used is in proportion to the incident and is no more than is needed

Otherwise, any use of force is unlawful

Force is used either to control or restrain and can range from leading a pupil by the arm through to more extreme circumstances, such as breaking up a fight or restraining a pupil to prevent violence/ injury. Reasonable force should not be used automatically in situations or as a form of discipline. Physical intervention to enforce compliance with staff instructions should never be used as a substitute for good behaviour management. Consideration should be given as to whether the intervention is **reasonable, proportionate and necessary**.

Reasonable force might involve staff:

- Physically interposing between pupils
- Blocking a pupil's path
- Leading a pupil by the hand or arm
- Shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of her back
- In extreme circumstances using distraction techniques (e.g. patting/ slapping a student on the back), holding, pushing or pulling a pupil (e.g. to separate pupils in a fight)



Preventative Strategies

The school actively promotes positive behaviour management strategies and seeks to develop good relationships at all levels thus reducing the need for use of physical intervention wherever possible.

All staff will seek to follow strategies likely to reduce the need for force in dealing with difficult pupils, based on the age of the pupil and context in which they are applied. They will endeavour at all times to:

- Move calmly and confidently
- Make clear, simple statements, telling the pupil to stop and the consequences of failing to do so
- Intervene early. Communicate with the pupil throughout the incident
- Try to maintain eye contact
- If necessary, summon another adult before the problem escalates
- If necessary, remove the audience from the immediate location

Staff should never give the impression that they have lost their temper or are acting from anger or frustration

When the school is aware that an individual pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, the school will draw up an individual Risk Assessment, consult parents and plan proactive and reactive measures appropriately.

When reasonable force should be used

Calm and measured responses will be considered before any force is applied in any situation. It is often inappropriate for a member of staff to intervene in an incident without help if he/ she may be at risk of injury. In this event, he/ she will remove other pupils who may be at risk and summon help from a colleague.

Reasonable force may be appropriate to restrain a pupil where action is necessary for self-defence; where there is an imminent risk of injury or damage to property or where a pupil is compromising good discipline. The member of staff should always try to ensure that they begin by telling the pupil to stop.

Examples are:

- A pupil attacks a member of staff or another pupil
- Pupils are fighting and physical intervention is required to separate them
- A pupil is in danger of causing injury or damage by accident, rough play, misuse of dangerous materials/ substance
- A pupil attempts to leave school (only if this places pupil at risk)

In exceptional circumstances, where there is an immediate risk of injury, a member of staff may need to take any necessary action consistent with the use of reasonable force, for example, to prevent a pupil running into the path of oncoming buses or throwing something that might hit someone.

The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the judgement of the member of staff concerned and should always depend on individual circumstance.



Staff should never act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:

- Holding a pupil around the neck or collar likely to restrict breathing
- Hitting, kicking, slapping or punching
- Throwing an object at a pupil
- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint or tripping a pupil up
- Holding or pulling a pupil by the hair or ear
- Holding a pupil face down on the ground

Staff should not intervene without help when dealing with an older pupil, a physically large pupil, more than one pupil or where there is serious risk of injury. Instead, they should remove other pupils who might be at risk, summon assistance from colleagues, inform pupils that this is being done and continue to defuse the situation orally.

Reasonable force should not be used to control a pupil in routine disciplinary situations for example:

- To block a pupil's path to stop an angry pupil walking away from a member of staff. if that pupil does not pose a threat to self or others
- To prevent a pupil exiting a room to avoid detention

In such cases the pupil can be dealt with at a later stage using the school's behaviour management policy.

In situations where pupils refuse to leave a classroom and are prejudicing good order and discipline, staff should send for assistance from senior staff. If necessary, reasonable force will be used to remove a disruptive student if they refuse to follow an instruction to do so by senior staff.

In keeping with the ethos of the school, reasonable force will only be applied as a last resort and in a way that preserves the dignity and respect of all concerned.

A short written record must be made of any occasion on which reasonable force is used to restrain a pupil and must be passed to the Principal by the end of the day.

The written record must include:

- Name(s) of pupils(s) concerned and when/ where incident occurred
- Names of witnesses/pupils or staff
- Reason why force was necessary
- The degree of force used and for how long
- The pupil's response and outcome of the incident
- Details of any apparent injury to the pupil or damage to the property

A member of Senior Leadership or Pastoral Team will inform parents of the incident as soon as possible and offer them an opportunity to discuss it.

Any incident will be recorded and retained and reported up to the Chair of the Board of Governors. Records will be kept until the date of the child's twenty-first birthday. Staff may retain their own copy of the report/ record.



Managing an incident

Staff and pupils will be given any necessary emotional support or medical aid required. The school nurse or a members of staff trained in first aid will check for any injuries where appropriate.

Parents will be contacted as soon as possible after any incident and any complaints by parents dealt with in accordance with the school’s Complaints Policy, bearing in mind the following key points:

- School staff have a legal power to use force and lawful use of the power will provide a defence to any related criminal prosecution or other legal action
- Suspension will NOT be an automatic response when a member of staff has been accused of using excessive force
- The Principal will support the staff member if they use this power

A member of staff who is subjected to physical violence or assault will be supported in taking any necessary action against the assailant.

All staff will have regular awareness-raising sessions on the issues in this policy. This policy will reviewed annually by Senior Leadership Team in the light of any additional requirements.

This policy is one of the school’s pastoral policies and should not be read in isolation from the whole school behaviour policy

Date of meeting when policy accepted by Governors	Signed by Chair or Vice Chair	Principal



Use of Reasonable Force - Record

Name(s) of pupils(s) concerned	
Date of incident	
Where incident occurred	
Staff involved	
Names of witnesses (pupils and/or staff)	
Reason why force was necessary	
The degree of force used and for how long	
The pupil's response and outcome of the incident	
Details of any apparent injury to the pupil	
Details of any damage to the property	



Use of Reasonable Force Policy



Date of ratification at Board of Governors	Date of last review	Signature Chair/Vice Chair	Signature Principal

Challenging girls today; creating women of value in the future



Principal: Mrs Louise Hanvey BSc (Hons) PGCE, PQHNI, PGDH

Hollywood Road, Belfast
BT4 2LY

Tel: 028 9047 1744

www.ashfieldgirls.org
info@ashgirls.belfast.ni.sch.uk