

CAVERSHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL



Use of Reasonable Force Policy November 2025

Review: November 2027

Caversham Primary School Primary School is a Rights Respecting School. School policies will respect the UN Convention on the rights of the child.

Article 28: Children have the right to a primary education. Discipline in schools should respect children's dignity.

Use of Reasonable Force

This policy has been written drawing on the [Department for Education Reasonable Force Guidance \(2013\)](#), [Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention \(2019\)](#), [Positive Environments where children can flourish \(Ofsted, 2021\)](#), [Behaviour in Schools Guidance \(2024\)](#) and [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2025\)](#)

Reasonable force definition

Reasonable force covers a broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils. This is usually either to control or restrain. 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.

Force is generally used to control pupils or to restrain them.

Control and Restraint:

- **Control** may involve passive physical contact (e.g., standing between pupils or blocking a doorway) or active physical contact (e.g., leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom).
- **Restraint** involves physically holding back or bringing a pupil under control. It is typically used in more serious situations, such as when two pupils are fighting and refuse to stop.

There are occasions when the use of reasonable force is necessary to safeguard a child. Staff may use reasonable force to prevent pupils from harming themselves or others, causing damage, or disrupting good order.

While staff will always aim to avoid causing injury, this may not be possible in every situation.

Scope of the policy

This applies to all pupils under our care.

All members of school staff have the legal power to use reasonable force. It can also apply to people whom the Co-Headteachers have temporarily put in charge of pupils such as unpaid volunteers or parents.

Reasonable force will only be used when necessary, in accordance with this policy.

In line with the DfE guidance, Caversham Primary School recognises that a 'no contact' policy is a risk and might place a member of staff in a position where they breach their duty of care towards a pupil, or prevent them taking action needed to prevent a pupil causing harm. This policy is designed to ensure that staff, pupils and staff are clear about when force might be used.

General Policy Aims

Staff at Caversham Primary School recognise that the use of reasonable force is the last in a range of strategies available to secure pupil safety / well-being and also to maintain good order and discipline. Our policy on use of reasonable force should therefore be read in conjunction with our Behaviour and Child Protection policies, paying particular notice to de-escalation strategies.

When might reasonable force be used at Caversham Primary School

- To prevent a child from hurting or harming themselves or others.
- To prevent a child from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- Remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so.
- Prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit.
- Prevent a pupil leaving the classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others
- Prevent a pupil from attacking a member of the school community.
- To stop a fight.
- Restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves or others through physical outbursts.
- When conducting a search for knives or weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco, fireworks, pornographic images, or articles that they reasonably suspect have been or are likely to be used to commit an offence or cause harm. Force may not be used to search for other items banned under the school rules.

Caversham Primary School will never use force as a punishment under any circumstances.

Strategies the school uses to reduce the need for physical intervention, including for pupils who have SEND.

Caversham Primary School recognises that physical intervention and the use of reasonable force can be distressing for children, their families and carers and staff members. However, sometimes this is the only realistic response to a situation. Any decision made will consider what is in the best interest of the child and/ or those around them in view of the risks presented.

Children and young people with SEND, mental health problems or with medical conditions, may respond with behaviour that challenges professionals and they may find it difficult to regulate their emotions. Sometimes, the likelihood of this behaviour can be anticipated by professionals working with the child. As such, where the use of reasonable force or physical intervention is more likely to occur, then Caversham Primary School will make arrangements to identify, assess and manage risk well, ensure high quality training for staff, involve children and young people, parents and carers, and advocates as appropriate. Caversham Primary School will also make arrangements for carefully assessing the needs of children and young people and the underlying causes of their behaviour, including through the use of therapeutic behaviour support plans. This will be particularly important for children with vulnerabilities and SEND and Caversham Primary School will tailor its support accordingly. In these circumstances, Caversham Primary School may

consider a risk assessment or plan to record potential triggers and de-escalation strategies to reduce the likelihood of the need for reasonable force.

Staff training

Schools can take their own decisions about staff training. The Co-Headteachers can consider whether members of staff require any additional training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities by also considering the needs of the pupils.

Managing the use of reasonable force

At Caversham Primary School all incidents of reasonable force are recorded on CPOMs.

This record will include:

- An account of the antecedents to the use of reasonable force.
- The behaviour the pupil was exhibiting that resulted in the need of reasonable force.
- The consequence of the use of the reasonable force and what happened after.
- A debrief with the staff member to review the incident.
- A debrief with the child and their family if appropriate at that time.
- A record of the contact made with parents regarding this.
- A note of any lessons learned or further action that the school and family may need to consider e.g., a plan and risk assessment.

Records of reasonable force are reviewed regularly by SLT and/ or Governors and strategies are considered where possible to reduce the likelihood of the need for reasonable force.

To monitor, understand and review our practice we analyse our records to consider:

- The impact on the child/ children.
- What the risks were and why restraint was the least restrictive option.
- What lessons we have learned to improve our practice going forward.
- Whether this has led to fewer incidents over time.

Where reasonable force has potentially meant that the harm threshold has been met in relation to concerns or allegations against a member of staff, because of a physical injury to a child, the school will consult with the LADO within one working day and in line with the local LADO arrangements in a timely fashion.

Contact with parents and carers

Caversham Primary School will inform parents if reasonable force has been used on their child.

If a risk assessment is utilised for a child then the contact arrangements with parents will be outlined on it.

Other forms of physical contact with pupils

It is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are occasions where this is proper and necessary.

Examples of this at Caversham Primary School include:

- Holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly or when walking together around the school;
- When comforting a distressed pupil;
- When a pupil is being congratulated or praised;
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument;
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching; and
- To give first aid.

Complaints

Caversham Primary School will resolve all complaints of use of force as quickly as possible being mindful of the need to appropriately investigate the incident. Where a member of staff has acted within the law - that is, they have used reasonable force in order to prevent injury, damage to property or disorder - this will provide a defence to any criminal prosecution or other civil or public law action. When a complaint is made the onus is on the person making the complaint to prove that his/her allegations are true - it is not for the member of staff to show that he/she has acted reasonably. Suspension will not be an automatic response to a member of staff being accused of using excessive force and the school will refer to statutory guidance in relation to this, liaising with the LADO where necessary. As employers, Caversham Primary School have a duty of care towards their employees and appropriate pastoral care will be given to any member of staff who is subject to a formal allegation following a use of force incident. This will include having a named contact at the school who can provide support.

Complaints should be made in line with Caversham Primary School's complaints policy.

Further Guidance

If you require further clarification on this document, please contact the Co-Headteachers.