

BILLINGHAT CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL
PHYSICAL INTERVENTION POLICY
November 2025

Introduction

Schools have a duty of care to their pupils. This may involve staff having to handle pupils to prevent them from harming themselves, others or damaging property.

This policy has been prepared for the support of all teaching and non teaching staff who come into contact with pupils and volunteers working within the school. This policy explains the school's arrangements with regard to physical intervention.

This policy has been developed in response to Section A12 of the LCC School Administration Handbook and the DfE Use of Reasonable Force Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies July 13.

This policy should be read alongside other policies such as Behaviour, anti Bullying, Intimate Care Policy and Health and Safety.

Power to use Reasonable Force

School staff at Billingham Church of England Primary School have the power to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances (meaning using no more force than is needed) to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- Committing any offence (or, for a pupil under the age of criminal responsibility, what would be an offence for an older pupil);
- Causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of any person (including the pupil him/herself); or
- Prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any pupils receiving education at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Definition of School Staff

- Any teacher who works at the school; and
- Any person whom the head has authorised to have control or charge of pupils. This:
 - Includes support staff whose job normally includes supervising pupils such as teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors.
 - Can also include people to whom the head has given temporary authorisation to have control or charge of pupils such as paid members of staff or unpaid volunteers (e.g. parents accompanying pupils on school organised educational visits).
- In the Headteachers absence authorisation can be granted from the Assistant Headteacher.
- This power may be used where a pupil (including one from another school) is on school premises or in the lawful control or charge of the member of staff (e.g. on a school visit).

Reasonable Force

- 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.
- 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 or shepherding a child away by placing a hand in the centre of their back.
- 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. It includes using more restrictive holds.

- School staff will always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but we recognise that in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the pupil.
- There is no legal definition of when it is reasonable to use force. That will depend on the precise circumstances of individual cases. To be judged lawful, the force would need to be in proportion to the consequences it is intended to prevent.
- The degree of force should be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result.
- Use of force could not be justified to prevent trivial behaviour. However deciding whether behaviour is trivial depends on circumstances.
- The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can and cannot be used in school.

Reasonable force can be used to:

- 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 staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground; and
- restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

Schools cannot:

- use force as a punishment.

Pupils with SEND

- Schools have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and children with special educational needs (SEN) with regards to reasonable force. School staff can use reasonable force on pupils with SEN or those who have disabilities but the judgement on whether to use force should not only depend on the circumstances but also on information and understanding of the particular special educational need and/or disability that a pupil might have.
- The school will not treat a disabled pupil less favourably for a reason relating to his/her disability, than someone to whom the reason does not apply, without justification.
- The school will take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage to pupils who are not disabled.
- If the school is aware that an individual pupil may be at a greater risk of needing restrictive physical interventions, it should be planned in consultation with the pupil and his/her parents/carers following an individual risk assessment.
- A positive handling plan will set out techniques that should be used.
- This plan will be documented in the pupil's records.
- All staff who come into contact with the pupil will be made aware of the plan.
- Pupils known to be at risk should be taught how to communicate in times of crisis and what strategies to use. School will use the advice and guidance from other external agencies here.
- Further to this there is a common law power of any citizen – in an emergency – to use reasonable force in self defence to prevent another citizen from being injured or committing a criminal offence.

Power to Search Pupils Without Consent

- Such force as is reasonable given the circumstances can be used by the Headteacher or in his absence the Assistant Headteacher to search pupils without their consent for knives or

weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco and cigarette papers, fireworks, pornographic images or articles that have been or could be used to commit an offence or cause harm.

- Force cannot be used to search for items banned under the school rules.
- We would not search pupils where resistance is expected and would then call the police.

Risk Assessments/ Positive Handling Plan

- We will assess the frequency and severity of incidents requiring use of force that are likely to occur and use the assessments to inform staff training.
- If following completion of a risk assessment/ Positive Handling Plan training is required it will be organised for staff.
- The Positive Handling Plan will be completed in consultation with all the staff who work on a daily basis with the child. A blank copy of this is included as Appendix 1 and can also be found on the G Drive: Staff Only: Positive Handling. This plan will automatically be put in place (if not already there) as a consequence of a physical intervention taking place.
- A copy of the plan will be distributed to all staff so that they can support the pupil and understand how best to manage him/her.

Other physical contact with pupils?

- It is not illegal to touch a pupil. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a pupil is proper and necessary.
- Examples of where touching a pupil might be proper or necessary:
 - 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.

Situations where staff should not normally intervene without help

- Help may sometimes be needed in dealing with a situation involving an older pupil, a large pupil, more than one pupil, or if the member of staff feels that he/she may be at risk of injury. In such situations staff would send a red card to another member of staff including the Headteacher to summon help quickly. The member of staff will also take steps to remove other pupils who might be at risk.

Recording and Reporting Incidents

- Records of significant incidents in which force was used will be kept in the Bound and Numbered Incident Reporting Book in the Headteacher's office.
- Reports should be completed within 24 hours of the incident occurring.
- After any recordable event parents/carers will be informed as will Governors.

Dealing with Complaints and Allegations

- If a specific allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff the guidance set out in Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education will be followed and the school will contact the Safeguarding Team 01522 554674.
- Other complains will be dealt with in line with the Complaints Policy taking into account the guidance in the DfE Use of Reasonable Force Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies July 13.