

*'Growing together,
Learning forever'*



**Woodstone Community
Primary School
Positive Handling
Policy**

Date: November 2025

Date for review: November 2028

This policy sets out Woodstone Community Primary School's framework for the use of reasonable force or 'positive handling'. The policy has been written following the DfE's 'Use of Reasonable Force (2013)' guidance. The use of reasonable force will only be used when there is no reasonable alternative and in line with the procedure set out within this policy. Only in the event of failure of clearly defined protocols to bring control to the situation, or imminent danger to persons, should positive handling be considered.

What is reasonable force?

1. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils.
2. 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.
3. 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
4. As mentioned above, 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.
5. 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.
6. School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the pupil.

Reasonable force would not include any of the following:-

- Holding a child around the neck, collar or other way that may restrict breathing
- Slapping, punching, kicking or tripping a child. Holding or pulling a child by their hair or ear.
- Twisting or forcing limbs against joints.
- Indecently touching or holding.
- Holding a child face down on the ground
- Lifting a child off the floor in order to intimidate

Who can use reasonable force?

- All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force
- This power applies to any member of staff at the school. It can also apply to people whom the headteacher has temporarily put in charge of pupils such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying students on a school organised visit.

Types of incident where the use of force may be necessary are given as:-

- **Action due to imminent risk of injury**
- **Action due to imminent risk of significant damage to property**
- **Action where a pupil is compromising good order and discipline**

The definition of restraint is **the positive application of force with the intention of overpowering the child**. The use of restraint requires skill, judgement and knowledge of non-harmful methods of control. Reasonable force would include those methods taught and practised in TeamTeach (or equivalent) training. The degree of force employed must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or the consequences it is intended to prevent. Any force should always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result. In all cases, the person exercising the restraint must be authorised by the Headteacher and have received appropriate approved training.

Staff must take into account if the child has an **individual risk assessment** or is listed on the **medical needs or SEND register** and follow any guidelines mentioned. Individual staff risk assessments must be considered

In the event of restraint becoming necessary, before touching the child, the member of staff should advise the child calmly and repeatedly about what they are going to do and why, and how the child might change his/her behaviour, in order that the restraint would become unnecessary. Any other children and adults present should also be warned.

A second adult should be called to reduce the risk of the member of staff or child suffering bodily harm and as a witness if allegations of assault are made later by the child.

While intervening, the member of staff must:-

- employ minimum physical force necessary for the minimum period needed
- wherever possible keep talking to the child and give choices as to how they could behave in a manner that would end the need for restraint
- avoid committing any act of punitive violence
- keep calm

Types of restraint which may be appropriate:

- Any holding tactic in which a young child is restrained without injury until the young child calms down
- Physical contact with a young person designed to control the young person's movements, which pose a danger (e.g. holding by the arms against the side of the body). Standing by the side of the young person is likely to minimise the risk to adult and young person.
- The holding of a young person's arms or legs to prevent/restrict striking/kicking.
- The use of sufficient physical force – without causing injury – to remove a weapon/dangerous object from a young person's grasp.
- Physically preventing a young person from exposing themselves to possible danger by leaving the premises.

If restraint is required for an extended period (for example, more than five minutes), a senior member of staff must monitor the situation closely with a view to safeguarding the child and the staff concerned.

After the incident, it is vital that a full report is completed by all concerned and the agreed de-briefing procedures adhered to in order to support the child, the members of staff involved, any other children involved and the parents. In the event of an incident when physical restraint is required, an incident form will be completed within 24 hours. If possible, all staff and children involved will undertake a de-briefing meeting with the Headteacher within 24 hours. The parents or carers should meet with SLT as soon after the incident as possible. A record of the incident will be recorded onto CPOMS. If an injury has incurred, the usual procedures regarding this will be followed.

If physical restraint is necessary to manage the behaviour of an individual, it may be appropriate to instigate a **Pastoral Support Plan (PSP)** during de-briefing meetings. In the event of physical restraint being necessary on more than one occasion, it may be appropriate to include **positive handling advice** in the child's **Individual Education Plan (IEP)**. It may also be necessary to compile an **individual risk assessment** in discussion with all staff, parents and any relevant outside agencies. In the case of a child with an EHCP, there will be opportunities to address issues of challenging behaviour at annual review meetings and an interim review organised in exceptional circumstances. **Looked-After Children** will have a **Personal Education Plan (PEP)** which features planning and strategies to address challenging behaviour, where appropriate.

The Headteacher, Leadership Team and Governors need to ensure that all authorised teachers and other authorised staff are appropriately trained and accept the responsibility of their role by being aware of the guidelines in this policy. Records are to be kept of any physical restraint or incident involving physical contact. These are to be clear, comprehensive and prompt (completed within 24 hours of incident). Parents must be informed and consulted each time a form is completed.

The Headteacher, SLT and Governors need to ensure that, as far as possible, preparation and planning has taken place to identify areas where physical restraint might be used. However, the school may also have to intervene in circumstances where preparation and planning have not been possible. When physical restraint takes place, the school will always endeavour to protect children and adults from physical harm, however, there may be cases in which some discomfort and/or bruising may occur, to both staff and children, as a result of the restraint taking place.

If, after receiving the report of an incident where physical intervention has occurred, the Headteacher considers the school's guidelines have been seriously breached and that further investigation is warranted, the incident should not be pursued, but action in accordance with Child Protection procedures must be taken. In these circumstances, any school internal investigations must cease and no further statements should be taken. If the school's guidelines have been breached, the Headteacher will contact the LA HR Department and advise the staff member to consult his/her professional association.

Power to search pupils without consent

In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described above, headteachers and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for the following "prohibited items":

- knives and weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- stolen items
- tobacco and cigarette papers
- fireworks
- pornographic images
- any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property.

Force **cannot** be used to search for items banned under the school rules.

Complaints procedure

It is not uncommon for pupils to make allegations of inappropriate or excessive use of force following an incident. Any such allegations should be noted in the de-brief. Any complaint will first be considered in the light of the school's child protection procedures. If child protection procedures are not appropriate, the school's complaint procedures will be followed.

If there is a concern about a staff member using restraint unnecessarily and there is an allegation against the member of staff, the Management of Allegations against Staff Procedures will be followed. The designated officer within the Local Authority (LADO) will be notified of any allegation against a member of staff and s/he will decide if a Strategy Meeting needs to be held.

Disability Equality

At Woodstone Community Primary School, we are committed to offering an inclusive curriculum to ensure the best possible progress for all of our pupils whatever their needs or abilities.

Pupils have Special Educational Needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. Pupils with a disability have special educational needs if they have any difficulty in accessing education and if they need any special educational provision to be made for them, which is anything that is additional to or different from what is normally available in schools in the area.

At Woodstone, we undertake the duties, including in relation to **this policy**:

- Not to treat disabled pupils less favourably for a reason which relates to their disability
- To take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage
- To do our best by all disabled members of our school community in relation to the requirements of this particular policy

Gender Equality

Woodstone Community Primary School fully recognises its duty to comply with equality and diversity legislation, and its Equality Information and Objectives set out the school's aims in relation to equality and what it will do to ensure that equality is fully embedded in practice. The school fully acknowledges its responsibilities in terms of equality issues in relation to gender, age, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation and gender reassignment, including in relation to **this policy**. Woodstone Community Primary School is firmly committed to equality and diversity, and when carrying out our functions, we shall have due regard to the need: to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment; to promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following relevant policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Health and Safety
- Staff Code of Conduct ('Guidance for Safer Working Practice')
- Behaviour Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- SEND