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Use of Force to Control or Restrain Pupils

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1. OBJECTIVES

In our school we believe that pupils and staff need to be safe, pupils know how to behave, and know that the adults around them are able to manage them safely and confidently. For a very small minority of pupils only will the use of force to control or restrain be needed, and, on such occasions, acceptable forms of intervention are used.

The majority of pupils behave well and conform to the expectations of our school. We have responsibility to operate an effective behaviour policy that encompasses preventative strategies for tackling inappropriate behaviour in relation to the whole school, each class, and individual pupils, thereby preventing serious breaches of school discipline and serious damage to property.

All the school staff need to feel able to manage inappropriate behaviour, and to have an understanding of what challenging behaviours might be communicating. They need to know what the options open to them are, and they need to be free of undue worries about the risks of legal action against them if they use appropriate physical intervention. Parents need to know that their children are safe with us, and they need to be properly informed if their child is the subject of the use of force to control or restrain them, including the nature of the intervention and the rationale for its use.

2. MINIMISING THE NEED TO USE FORCE

In our school we aim to:

- create a calm, ordered environment that minimises the risk of incidents arising that might require using force
- use nurture and wellbeing whole school approaches to teach pupils how to manage conflict and strong feelings, during PSHE lessons and EWaN interventions
- de-escalate incidents if they do arise
- only use force when the risks involved in doing so are outweighed by the risks involved in not using force
- use risk assessments and positive handling plans for individual pupils

3. STAFF AUTHORISED TO USE FORCE

- All teachers and staff whom the head teacher has authorised to have control or charge of pupils automatically have the statutory power to use force.
- In some circumstances, staff whose jobs do not normally involve supervising pupils and volunteers working with pupils will be authorised to be in control or charge of pupils and therefore have statutory power to use force. In these cases, the head teacher or senior member of staff will inform the teachers and other staff (with permanent authorisation) who has temporary authorisation.

4. DECIDING WHETHER TO USE FORCE

In our school, authorised staff will only use force when:

- the potential consequences of not intervening are sufficiently serious to justify considering use of force;
- the chances of achieving the desired result by other means are low;
- and the risks associated with not using force outweigh those of using force.

School staff (including people with temporary authorisation to have charge or control of pupils) will be kept informed about and advised how to deal with pupils who present particular risks to themselves or others (as a result of SEN and/or disabilities and/or other personal circumstances, such as domestic violence) by appropriate handover and liaison.

School staff will minimise the highest risks, for example by calling the police if a pupil suspected of having a weapon seems likely to resist a search.

5. USING FORCE

Before using force at our school, staff will engage the pupil in a calm and measured tone, making clear that their behaviour is unacceptable and setting out how the pupil could choose to change their behaviour.

The use of force will only be proportionate to the level of risk and will be reduced at the earliest possible time.

Staff will only use methods they are trained to use unless there is an extreme emergency and where there is no viable alternative.

Staff are advised that, as far as possible, they should not use force unless or until another responsible adult is present to support, observe and call for assistance.

6. STAFF TRAINING

In our school, we have adopted the Team Teach approach to staff training. When appropriate, staff receive Team Teach training and are then fully accredited to use the approach. Staff update their skills/re-accredit every two to three years as needed. We consider all staff to have a responsibility for pupil behaviour.

The Team Teach training includes de-escalation techniques which introduce the use of force at an appropriate time, based on a range of other options.

Staff working closely with pupils with SEN and/or disabilities will undertake risk assessments to inform decisions regarding levels of staff training required. These staff will also inform the circumstances in which the school will temporarily authorise staff or volunteers to have control or charge of such pupils.

7. RECORDING INCIDENTS

In our school we have a bound and numbered book for the logging of incidents. We report all cases of the use of force to the Local Authority, as requested.

8. REPORTING INCIDENTS

The governing body of our school will ensure that "significant incidents" where a member of staff has used force on a pupil are recorded and reported to parents.

If it is likely that reporting the incident will result in significant harm to the pupil, then the incident will be reported to Somerset Direct (Tel: 0300 123 2224) or to the police.

We will take into account:

- a) An incident where unreasonable use of force is used on a pupil would always be a significant incident.
- b) Any incident where substantial force has been used (e.g. physically pushing a pupil out of a room) would be significant.
- c) The use of a restraint technique is significant.
- d) An incident where a child was very distressed (though clearly not over reacting) would be significant.

Each parent or parents will be informed by the head teacher or senior member of staff of any significant incident when force has been used on their child, ideally by telephone as soon as practicable and then confirming the details in writing.

9. POST-INCIDENT SUPPORT

Members of staff who have been assaulted may wish to report the incident to the police and/or seek advice and support from their trade union representative.

If staff or pupils have been injured, immediate first aid will be provided and medical help accessed, if necessary. Staff and pupils will also receive emotional support.

Letters to parents informing them about the use of force may be used to engage in discussion regarding future course of action. An Individual Behaviour Plan may be necessary to prevent and deal with any further recurrence of behaviour that could lead to the use of force.

Staff will aim to help the pupil to develop strategies to avoid repeating the difficult behaviour.

School will provide ongoing support for staff and pupils as long as necessary in respect of:

- a) physical consequences
- b) emotional stress/loss of confidence
- c) opportunity to analyse, reflect and learn from the incident

10. COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS

Parents and pupils have a right to complain about actions taken by school staff including use of force. If a specific allegation is made against a member of staff, then our school will follow appropriate guidance.

Other complaints will be dealt with via the school's complaints procedure.

For further guidance see county policy on the use of force to control or restrain pupils.

11. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be monitored and reviewed in 1 year or earlier if appropriate.