



St Mary's School
CAMBRIDGE

Physical Restraint and Contact Policy

This policy is the responsibility of the Deputy Head: Pastoral and Boarding

Last review: February 24

Next review: February 25

Overview

The governors and staff of St Mary' School, Cambridge (the School) fully recognise the contribution they make to safeguarding and promoting the welfare and wellbeing of children. We recognise that all staff, visitors, and volunteers, have a full and active part to play in protecting our pupils from harm.

We believe that our School should provide a caring, positive, safe, and stimulating environment which promotes the social, physical, emotional, and moral development of the individual child.

The governors and staff of St Mary' School Cambridge understand the difficulties surrounding this area of safeguarding and are committed to providing support and care to both the children and staff, visitors and volunteers, in accordance with the ethos of the School, whilst understanding the need for sensitivity. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Staff Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Management Policy and Discipline, Exclusions and Required Removal Policy.

This Policy takes into account the Department of Education guidance ['Use of Reasonable Force - advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies' \(Updated January 2025\)](#)

Application: The Policy applies to all pupils (including EYFS, sixth form and Boarders) and staff working at the School and 'staff' is defined for the purposes of this Policy, as any person working at the School, whether under a contract of employment, contract for services or otherwise than under a contract whether paid or unpaid, whatever their position, role, or responsibilities. Staff includes (but is not limited to) teachers, contractors (including peripatetic teachers), teaching assistants and support, coaches, part-time staff, graduate/language assistants, sports/gap year assistants, all support staff, temporary supply, agency staff and casual workers, exam invigilators, work experience students and volunteers.

Physical Restraint

In exceptional circumstances, where there is immediate risk of injury, a member of staff may need to take any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of 'reasonable force'. Before intervening physically, staff should wherever practicable, tell the pupil to stop, and what will happen if she does not. The staff member should continue to attempt to communicate with the pupil throughout the incident and should make it clear that physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary. In such cases only the minimum force necessary will be used whilst maintaining a calm and measured approach.

Staff should not put themselves at risk of injury. In these circumstances, the teacher should remove the other pupils who may be at risk, seek assistance from a colleague or colleagues and telephone reception and ask for the support of a senior member of staff. In extreme circumstances staff may feel that it is necessary to call the police. Staff should inform the pupil(s) that they have sent for help. Until assistance arrives, staff should continue to attempt to defuse the situation orally and try to prevent the situation from escalating.

Types of Incidents

There are a wide variety of situations in which reasonable force might be appropriate, or necessary, to control or restrain a pupil. They will fall into three broad categories:

- Where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury.
- Where there is a developing risk of injury.
- Where a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order in a serious way.

Examples of situations that fall within one of the first two categories are:

- A pupil attacks a member of staff or another pupil.
- Pupils are fighting.
- A pupil is engaged in, or is on the verge of committing, deliberate damage, or vandalism to property and by doing so would hurt or injure themselves or others.
- A pupil is causing, or at risk of causing, injury, or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials or objects.

Application of Force

Physical intervention can take several forms. It might involve staff:

- physically interposing between pupils
- blocking a pupil's path
- holding
- pushing
- pulling
- leading a pupil by the hand or arm
- shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back
- or (in extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds.

In exceptional circumstances, where there is an immediate risk of injury, a member of staff may need to take any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of 'reasonable force': for example, to prevent a young pupil running off a pavement onto a busy road, or to prevent a pupil hitting someone, or throwing something.

In other circumstances staff should not act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:

- Holding a pupil by the neck or collar, or in a way that may restrict their ability to breathe
- Slapping, punching, or kicking the pupil
- Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint
- Tripping up a pupil
- Holding or pulling a pupil by the hair or ear

- Contact with sexually sensitive areas
- Holding a pupil face down on the ground

The Range of Interventions: How may pupils be restrained?

In the unlikely event of a staff member needing to use restrictive physical intervention, the following points should be noted:

- Restrictive physical intervention must be consistent with the concept of reasonable force
- The circumstances must warrant the use of force
- The degree of force employed must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the minimum to achieve the desired result
- Avoid causing pain or injury
- Avoid holding or putting pressure on joints
- In general hold long bones
- Do not hold a pupil face down on the ground or in any position that might increase the risk of suffocation

Planning for incidents

If the School is aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a way that may require physical control or restraint, it will plan how best to respond in the situation.

The School will endeavour to:

- Manage the pupil and situation by de-fusing the situation
- Involve the parents to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the School may need to take
- Brief staff to ensure that they know exactly what action should be taken and where appropriate provide training or guidance
- Ensure that additional support can be summoned if appropriate

Physical contact with pupils

Further information can be found in the Staff Behaviour Policy.

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for staff to have physical contact with pupils (such as demonstrating exercises or techniques in sport or music tuition, during drama or PE, first aid or where pupils with special educational needs or disabilities need more physical contact to assist their everyday learning), but it is crucial that they only do so in ways appropriate to their professional role. Staff should, therefore, always use their professional judgement. Staff should not have unnecessary physical contact with pupils and should be alert to the fact that minor forms of friendly physical contact can be misconstrued by pupils or onlookers.

Where exercises or procedures need to be demonstrated, extreme caution should be used if the demonstration involves contact with pupils and, wherever possible, contact should be avoided. It is acknowledged that some staff, for example, those who teach PE and games, or who offer music tuition, will, on occasions, have to initiate physical contact with pupils in order to support a pupil so they can perform a task safely, to demonstrate the use of a particular piece of equipment/instrument or assist them with an exercise. This should be done with the pupil's agreement.

Contact under these circumstances should be for the minimum time necessary to complete the activity and take place in an open environment. Staff should explain the intended action to the pupil and remain sensitive to any discomfort expressed verbally or non-verbally by the child.

A member of staff can never take the place of a parent in providing physical comfort and should be cautious of any demonstration of affection. In instances of pupil distress, support, agency and supply staff, contractors and volunteers should wherever possible seek the assistance of a member of the teaching staff or one of the school nurses rather than become involved themselves. If a member of support staff or volunteer has helped a pupil in distress the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed. Details can be found on the safeguarding posters in school or the *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*.

First aid, personal and/or intimate care (removing wet clothes or toileting in lower years) should only be administered by trained staff, and they should adhere to the School's policies on administering first aid / medication and intimate care and the reporting requirements, should explain to the pupil what is happening and ensure that another adult is present or aware of the action being taken.

Pupils are entitled to privacy when changing or showering, although there must be an appropriate level of supervision to ensure safety. Staff should announce themselves when entering changing rooms and avoid remaining unless required.

Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult, or represent a misuse of authority. If a member of staff believes that an action could be misinterpreted, the incident and circumstances should be recorded as soon as possible, the DSL informed and, if appropriate, a copy placed on the pupil's file.
