

Physical Restraint and Contact Policy

Argyle House School

This Policy also includes the Early Years Foundation Stage and Before and After School Provision

Statement of Intent

The proprietor and staff of Argyle House School fully recognise the contribution it makes to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. We recognise that all staff, including volunteers, have a full and active part to play in protecting our pupils from harm.

All staff believe that our school should provide a caring, positive, safe and stimulating environment which promotes the social, physical and moral development of the individual child. The school recognises the importance of working within the framework for Every Child Matters: Change for Children and the five outcomes outlined within it:

To Be Healthy
To Stay Safe
To Enjoy and Achieve
To Make a Positive Contribution
To Achieve Economic Well-Being

The staff of Argyle House School understand the difficulties surrounding this area of safeguarding and are committed to providing support and care to both the children and staff, in accordance with the ethos of the school, whilst understanding the need for sensitivity.

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'.

Staff members of Argyle House School should not put themselves at risk of injury. In these circumstances, the teacher should remove the other pupils who may be at risk and seek assistance from a colleague or colleagues and if necessary telephone 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, or significant damage to property;
- Where a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline.

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;
- 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;
- A pupil is running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way in which he or she might have or cause an accident likely to injure him or herself or others;
- A pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave school (N.B. this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school).

Examples of situations that fall into the third category may include:

- A pupil persistently refuses to obey an order to leave a classroom;
- A pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson.

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;
- Holding a pupil face down on the ground.

The Range of Interventions: How May Pupils be Restrained?

Before intervening physically, staff should wherever practicable, tell the pupil who is misbehaving to stop, and what will happen if he or 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.

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.

Recording Incidents

Any member of staff involved in an incident requiring physical intervention must inform the Head and write a detailed report of the incident to help prevent any misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the situation.

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 diffusing 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

Physical contact may be misconstrued by a pupil, parent or observer. Touching pupils, including well-intentioned gestures, can if repeated regularly lead to serious questions being raised.

Where Physical Contact may be Acceptable

There are occasions when physical contact with a pupil may be necessary, for example to demonstrate exercises or technique during PE lessons, during sports coaching or when providing first aid. Young children and children with special educational needs may need staff to provide physical prompts to help.

There may be occasions where a distressed pupil needs comfort and reassurance, which may include physical comforting such as a caring parent would give. Staff should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that what is normal and natural does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same pupil over a period of time. Staff should use their own professional judgement when they feel a pupil needs this kind of emotional support and should reflect the child's needs, age and level of maturity. Where a member of staff has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance they should seek the advice and guidance of the Head Teacher.

General Guidelines

As a general principle staff must not make gratuitous physical contact with their pupils. It is particularly unwise to attribute touching to their teaching style or as a way of relating to pupils.

There may be some children for whom touching is particularly unwelcome. For example, some pupils may be particularly sensitive to physical contact because of their cultural background or special needs or because they have been abused. Where appropriate, staff should receive information on these children, whilst ensuring that all matters of confidentiality and sensitivity remain of paramount importance. In addition, there should be a common approach where staff and pupils are of different sexes. Physical contact with pupils become increasingly open to question as pupils reach and go through adolescence and staff should also bear in mind that even innocent and well-intentioned physical contact can sometimes be misconstrued.