



# Reasonable Force

**The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact with pupils:**

- **'Force'** is used either to control or restrain; e.g. breaking up a fight, or restraint to prevent violence or injury
- **'Reasonable in the circumstances'** means using no more force than is needed
- **'Control'** is either passive, e.g. standing between pupils, or active, e.g. leading a pupil by the arm out of a classroom
- **'Restraint'** means to hold back physically or to bring a pupil under control

## Who can use reasonable force?

- All staff can legally use reasonable force
- Volunteers or parents accompanying students on an education trip, if authorised by the Head

Staff should use their professional judgement to make a decision to physically intervene or not and avoid causing injury, pain or humiliation.

**Settings do not require parental consent to use force on a student.**

## When can reasonable force be used?

Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, damaging property or causing disorder; some examples are:

- **Removing** disruptive pupils if they have refused an instruction to leave class, or
- **Preventing** pupils from:
  - Disrupting an event, trip or visit
  - Leaving the classroom where this would risk their safety or disrupt others
  - Attacking someone
- **Restraining** a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts
- **Stopping** a fight

**Governors** should ensure that staff, volunteers, parents, carers & pupils understand the settings' behaviour policy, including the use of reasonable force, and make appropriate adjustments for pupils with special education needs or disability.

## All education settings should:

- Speak to parents and carers about serious incidents involving the use of force & consider how to record them, taking into account the:
  - Pupil's behaviour and level of risk presented at the time of the incident
  - degree of force used
  - effect on the pupil and member of staff
  - pupil's age
- Risk-assess all situations where a pupil has behaved disruptively
- Develop strategies to manage the behaviour, involving parents and carers
- Brief the staff and ensure that additional support is available
- Consider the needs of pupil's when deciding whether staff require training to carry out their responsibilities
- Understand there are occasions when physical contact with a pupil is proper & necessary e.g.
  - providing comfort, praise or congratulation
  - demonstrating the use of a musical instrument
  - showing techniques during PE lessons
  - giving first aid

**Education settings cannot use force as a punishment – this is always unlawful**

**The [Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, DfE 2014](#) states that you must always record physical interventions used for a child under 5 years old and inform parents and carers on the same day if practicable.**

## For further information:

- [Use of reasonable force - Advice for Head Teachers, staff and governing bodies, DfE 2013](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education, DfE 2016](#)
- [Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, DfE 2014](#)