

Upottery Primary School

Policy on the Use of Reasonable Force

Summer 1999

"It is important that schools have a policy about the use of force to control or restrain pupils. All members of staff who may have to intervene physically with pupils must clearly understand the options and strategies open to them. They must know what is acceptable and what is not. The Governing Body, parents and pupils also need to know that." DfEE

Two legal principles collide here. The child has the right not to be touched and we can never take this away and the duty of the school to safeguard the child's welfare. These reasons demand that we are very careful in these circumstances.

Prevention should be the primary consideration. Steps to avoid these situations should be taken and the adult should be able to demonstrate that those steps were taken. Physical restraint should always be the last resort. Delay if at all possible. However, in some circumstances e.g. a child running out onto the road, you might be deemed negligible if you do not intervene.

Make a risk assessment each time. Consider the environment, the medical circumstances and the clothing. Always say that the action being taken is for the good of the child, trying to keep them safe. Assure them that the restraint is not a punishment. Never use other children in the restraint.

Reasonable force might be used

- in self defence, where risk of injury is imminent;
- when there is developing risk of injury to themselves or others.

Physical intervention may involve staff in

- holding
- pushing
- pulling

Staff should not act in a way that could be expected to cause injury, for example

- holding a pupil around the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict the pupil's ability to breathe;
- slapping, punching or kicking a 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.

Staff should always avoid touching or holding a pupil in a way that might be considered indecent.

The Headteacher must always be informed immediately. The incident should be followed up with time for the adult and child to talk about the situation. The circumstances must be recorded as soon as possible stating the time, duration, hold used, injuries, witnesses and further actions or events.

References used in drawing up this policy:

DfEE Circular 10/98

Advice from the Devon Association of Primary Headteachers