



Policy for Physical Restraint

Definition for the purpose of this policy

“Physical Restraint” is defined as a judicious control measure used with a resisting child in order to control movement, location and behaviour such as violence or abuse to persons, self or property.

Background – Legal Framework

The Department of Health Guidance on permissible forms of control in children in residential care, 1993 explains

- physical restraint as “...the positive application of force with the intention of overpowering the child. That is, in order to protect a child from harming him/herself or others, or seriously damaging property. The proper use of physical restraint requires skill and judgement as well as knowledge of non-harmful methods of restraint. The onus is on the teacher/carer to determine the degree of restraint appropriate and when it should be used.”
- injury as “..significant injury. Includes actual or grievous bodily harm, physical or sexual abuse, risking the lives of or injury to self or others by wilful or reckless behaviour and self- poisoning”.

In general, the rule is that any person who touches another person without his or her consent commits an unlawful act. But DfEE circular 10/98, The use of Force to Control or Restrain People, states “that physical restraint is necessary if the purpose of the physical restraint is to prevent an immediate danger of injury to any person, or an imminent danger to the property of any person (person includes the Student).”

It must be possible to show that, unless immediate action had been taken, there were strong indicators that injury or damage to property would follow.

General Principles Governing Intervention to Maintain Control

A distinction must be maintained between the use of one off intervention, which is appropriate in the particular circumstances and using it repeatedly as a regular feature of a regime.

Physical restraint should be used as a last resort when other strategies have failed. It should serve to de-escalate or prevent a potentially violent situation. It should not be used purely to force compliance with staff instructions when there is no immediate risk to people or property.

Staff must be able to show that the method of intervention was in keeping with the incident that gave rise to it. The degree of and duration of any force applied must be proportional to the circumstances. The potential for damage to persons and property in applying any form of restraint must always be kept in view. Escalation should be avoided at all costs, especially if it would make the overall situation more destructive and/or unmanageable.

The age and competence of the student should be taken into account when deciding what degree of intervention is necessary. The means of control should be appropriate to that particular student.

An adult using restraint will often escalate the emotional arousal of the person being restrained. A student is not necessarily in a position of being responsible for their actions during or immediately after restraint and injury is caused (behaviour is out of control, not a planned incident). It therefore should not in itself be a cause for an exclusion as the context has contributed to the incident.

The use of restraint will often escalate the emotional arousal of the person being restrained. A student cannot necessarily be held responsible for his/her actions during or immediately after restraint. Such actions should not therefore in themselves be grounds for exclusion.

A student must never be asked to restrain another student.

Procedure for the Exercise of Physical Restraint

1. Staff should have good grounds for believing that immediate action is necessary to prevent a student from significantly injuring him/herself or others, or causing serious damage to property.
2. Staff should take steps in advance to avoid the need for physical restraint, eg through dialogue and diversion, and the student should be warned orally that physical restraint will be used unless she/he desists.
3. Physical restraint must not be used in anger. When it becomes apparent that a student is not responding to verbal instruction and a violent incident is imminent, the member of staff, wherever possible, should call for assistance before engaging in physical restraint. Calling for support and assistance should not be considered as a personal failure, but should be viewed as an essential step in order to provide a witness for any incident in addition to providing assistance.
4. When it becomes necessary to restrain a student, the member of staff should continue to talk to the student in a calm manner offering choices and time for the student to become calm. Making statements such as "I will let you go as soon as you are calm" or "as soon as I know you are safe" may help to resolve the situation.
5. Only the minimum force necessary to prevent physical injury or damage should be applied. Particular care must be taken to avoid inflicting any unnecessary pain or injury.
6. Restraint must not involve deliberate, painful or dangerous procedures. It should:
 - i. Never interfere with breathing, blood supply or genital areas
 - ii. Never hold the head, throat or fingers
 - iii. Never hold wrists at the joints The hold should be discontinued as soon as the situation is deemed safe.
7. When using physical restraint members of staff have a responsibility to ensure that means other than force have been attempted or are proving impractical.
8. As soon as it is safe, restraint should be gradually relaxed to allow the student to regain self-control. The student should be told what will happen next to calmly reassure them, for example that you are going to release the hold and want them to stay quietly with you. Restraint should be an act of care and control, not punishment.
9. The circumstances and justification for using physical restraint must be recorded immediately or as soon as possible, but no later than the next working day.
10. The member of staff must inform the Head Master and the Deputy Head Master as soon as possible of the incident. The student's view should also be recorded as soon as possible, preferably on the same day.
11. If a member of staff or student has suffered an injury this must be reported and recorded at the Health Centre and a record of the injury should be passed on immediately to the H&S Officer.

12. The Head Master or Deputy Head Master will discuss the incident with the teacher within 24 hours. A written record should include marking on a diagram to show where restraint has been used, the duration of the holding and a note of any potential injury to staff or student.

13. The Head Master/Deputy Head Master or Housemaster will inform parents of the incident and allow the opportunity to discuss it.

14. Counselling may be needed for staff who have been distressed by the incident. Following the incident the student should be counselled on the reasons why it was necessary to restrain him/her.

Legal Consequences of Inappropriate Physical Restraint

Unreasonable or excessive use of force may result in criminal proceedings for assault. Civil proceedings for damages for trespass to the person may also be instituted. Additionally, disciplinary proceedings may be taken against the staff member for unreasonable or excessive use of force.

No guidelines can cover every eventuality. Staff are expected to make their own professional judgements in the light of this guidance. Staff can then expect to be supported when an action in good faith follows from such judgements.



Director of Pastoral Care
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