



Use of “Reasonable Force”

THIS POLICY SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION

2025

THESE CAN BE FOUND ON THE SCHOOL WEBSITE HERE:

<https://www.stedmunds.org.uk/about-us/policies-inspection-reports/>

1. Introduction

St Edmund's School is committed to creating a safe, respectful, and supportive environment in which pupils and staff can work and learn without fear or disruption. In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary for staff to use reasonable force to prevent pupils from causing harm to themselves, others, or property, or from seriously disrupting the good order and discipline of the school.

This policy is informed by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Sections 93–95), the Independent School Standards Regulations (ISSRs), and the Department for Education's guidance Use of Reasonable Force (latest edition). It also aligns with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and our duties under Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).

The policy applies to all staff authorised to have control or charge of pupils, including teaching and support staff, lunchtime supervisors, and, where applicable, boarding staff. It provides clarity on when and how reasonable force may be used, emphasising that it is always a last resort, proportionate to the circumstances, and applied with the minimum force necessary. It also outlines recording and reporting procedures, parental communication, and staff training requirements to ensure transparency and accountability.

Our approach seeks to protect the rights and dignity of all pupils, uphold the school's ethos, and ensure that any use of reasonable force is consistent with both safeguarding principles and the expectations of the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). This policy is reviewed annually or sooner if legislation or guidance changes.

2. Legal Context

Relevant Legislation:

Education and Inspections Act 2006 – Sections 93–95

Education Act 1996

School Standards and Framework Act 1998

Children Act 1989 & Children Act 2004

Independent School Standards Regulations 2014 (ISSRs)

Equality Act 2010

Human Rights Act 1998 – Especially Article 3 (freedom from inhuman or degrading treatment) and Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life).

Relevant Statutory Guidance:

DfE: Use of Reasonable Force – Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies (latest edition)

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2025)

Working Together to Safeguard Children

Behaviour and Discipline in Schools – Advice for Headteachers and School Staff (DfE)

Searching, Screening and Confiscation – Advice for Schools (DfE)

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 – Duty of care for staff and pupil safety during interventions.

3. Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment is never used at St Edmund's School, nor is it threatened.

Various actions involving physical contact between staff and pupils are inappropriate and should be avoided. These include all forms of manhandling or physical force directed at the pupil:

- pushing
- grabbing
- pulling
- striking

and include the imposition of physical discomfort or distress, and the threatening of the same.

4. Reasonable Force

Definition of Reasonable Force

Reasonable force refers to the minimum degree of physical intervention necessary to prevent harm, damage, or serious disruption. It is always proportionate to the circumstances, used only as a last resort, and never employed as a form of punishment.

Circumstances where Reasonable Force may be used

The Education Act 1996 allows staff to use reasonable force in order to prevent a pupil from:

- To prevent a pupil from injuring themselves or others
- To prevent serious damage to property
- To prevent behaviour that seriously disrupts the good order and discipline of the school
- To prevent a pupil from committing an offence

This includes teaching staff and all support staff to whom the Head has delegated the authority to exert control over or have charge of pupils.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) states:

“There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in schools and colleges to use ‘reasonable force’ to safeguard children. The term ‘reasonable force’ covers the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children. This can range from guiding a child to safety by the arm, to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a child needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury. ‘Reasonable’ in these circumstances means ‘using no more force than is needed’. The use of force may involve either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil’s path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm out of the classroom.”

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Staff should also read:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools>

The following sets out how to support children and young people with learning disabilities, autistic spectrum conditions and mental health difficulties who are at risk of restrictive intervention in special education settings, however all schools and colleges may find the information helpful:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-the-need-for-restraint-and-restrictive-intervention>

5. Deciding whether to use force

Staff should only use force when:

- the potential consequences of not intervening are sufficiently serious to justify considering use of force;
- the chances of achieving the desired result by other means are low;
- the risk associated with not using force outweighs that of using force.

6. Using force

It is important for staff to use the **minimum force** necessary to achieve the desired result.

In practice, staff must

- give a clear oral warning to the pupil that force may have to be used;
- be aware that any form of restraint that is likely to injure a pupil (particularly anything that could constrict breathing) should only be used in extreme emergencies and where there is no viable alternative;
- where possible not use force unless or until another responsible adult is present to support, observe and call for assistance.
- Consider the particular vulnerabilities of individual students (see “Vulnerable Groups” below)

Staff receive training in de-escalation strategies and safe handling techniques.

7. Reporting and Monitoring

1. Incident must be reported immediately to the Head and DSL.
2. A written record is made including date, time, names, circumstances, and outcome.
3. Parents are informed as soon as practicable after the incident.
4. Follow-up support is offered to both pupil and staff involved.

Detailed and up to date records (see Appendix 1) should also be kept of any incidents where force is used and a copy of these records lodged with the Head and the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Parents of the pupil in question will always be informed by the school of such an incident at the first opportunity.

8. Vulnerable Groups

The school recognises that certain pupils may be more vulnerable to the potential impact of the use of reasonable force. This includes, but is not limited to, pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), those with social, emotional, or mental health needs, children in care, young carers, and those who have experienced trauma or adverse childhood experiences. Staff are expected to exercise heightened professional judgment and sensitivity when considering the use of reasonable force with vulnerable pupils, taking into account any specific risk assessments, individual behaviour support plans, and advice from the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Wherever possible, de-escalation strategies and alternative interventions must be prioritised to minimise the need for physical intervention. Any incident involving reasonable force with a vulnerable pupil will be reviewed promptly to ensure that support strategies are updated and communicated to all relevant staff.

Staff must be mindful the following passage in *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)*:

“When using ‘reasonable force’ in response to risks presented by incidents involving children with SEND, mental health problems or with medical conditions, schools and colleges should in considering the risks carefully recognise the additional vulnerability of these groups. They should also consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 (see paragraphs 86-93), for example in relation to making reasonable adjustments and their Public Sector Equality Duty. By planning positive and proactive behaviour support, for instance through drawing up individual behaviour plans for more vulnerable children, and agreeing them with parents and carers, schools and colleges can reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviour and the need to use ‘reasonable force’”.

EOC

September 2025

Reviewed:

1. June 2018
2. September 2018
3. September 2019
4. September 2020
5. September 2021
6. September 2022
7. September 2023

8. September 2024
9. September 2025

Review Date:
September 2026

Appendix 1

USE OF FORCE TO CONTROL OR RESTRAIN PUPILS: INCIDENT RECORD

Details of pupil or pupils on whom force was used by a member of staff (name, class)
Date, time and location of incident
Names of staff involved (directly or as witnesses)
Details of other pupils involved (directly or as witnesses), including whether any of the pupils involved were vulnerable for SEN, disability, medical or social reasons
Description of incident by the staff involved, including any attempts to de-escalate and warnings given that force might be used
Reason for using force and description of force used
Any injury suffered by staff or pupils and any first aid and/or medical attention required
Reasons for making a record of the incident
Follow up, including post incident support and any disciplinary action against pupils
Any information about the incident shared with staff not involved in it and external agencies
When and how those with parental responsibility were informed about the incident and any views they have expressed
Has any complaint been lodged? (Details should not be recorded here) Y / N

Report compiled by:

Name and role:

Signature:

Date:

Report countersigned by:

Name and role:

Signature:

Date: