



USE OF REASONABLE FORCE POLICY

This policy was agreed by the Management Committee: Summer 2025

This policy will be reviewed: Summer 2026

Introduction

Situations involving decisions about whether to use force can occur in any school, including the PRU. Both using force and deciding not to can entail significant risks for pupils and staff. This policy is designed to minimise these risks. The policy has been written in light of the DfE "Use of Reasonable Force" guidance dated July 2013 (and will be amended should the guidance be updated later in 2025 as expected).

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

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 enables PRU/PRU staff to use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from:

- a) Committing a criminal offence (or for a pupil under the age of criminal responsibility, what would be an offence for an older pupil)
- b) Causing personal injury or damage to property
- c) Prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the PRU/PRU or among any pupils receiving education at the PRU/PRU, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Objectives

- To maintain the safety of pupils and staff
- To prevent serious breaches of PRU discipline
- To prevent serious damage to property

Minimising the need to use force

In order to minimise the occasions on which the use of force would be required, the PRU will:

- Create an environment that is positive, predictable and safe and minimises the risk of incidents arising that might require the use of force
- Teach pupils how to manage conflict and strong feelings
- Use strategies and procedures within the PRU behaviour policy to de-escalate incidents if they do arise
- To follow the approved approach to de-escalation following the Steps approach. Details of Steps and the PRU's approach to de-escalation and use of force are shared with parents and carers at the start of a pupil's placement and more information can be obtained from the PRU office.
- Only use force when risks involved in doing so are outweighed by the risks involved in not using force
- Put in place risk assessments and positive handling plans for individual pupils.

Staff authorised to use force

Permanent authorisation is granted to all teachers and staff that have control or charge of pupils in line with the statutory power granted to them. This includes teaching staff on permanent and fixed term contracts and learning support assistants. Other staff employed by the PRU such as administration staff are also authorised. All PRU staff will have appropriate training.

Temporary authorisation may apply to volunteer parent helpers. Temporary authorisation may be granted in relation to parent helpers accompanying a PRU trip and this will be written into the risk assessment and helper guidance.

Deciding whether to use force

Force should be used as a protective measure and never as a disciplinary penalty. The judgement on whether to use force and what force to use should always depend on the circumstances of each case and in the case of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities, information about the individual concerned.

Staff will make judgements about:

- The chance of achieving the desired result by other means
- The seriousness of the incident assessed by the effect of the injury, damage or disorder which is likely to result if force is not used
- The relative risks associated with physical intervention compared with using other strategies.

Risk assessments

SLT will regularly assess the frequency and severity of incidents requiring use of force that are likely to occur in the PRU. Where it is known that force is more likely to be necessary to restrain a particular pupil (such as a pupil whose SEN and/or disability is associated with extreme behaviour) an individual risk assessment will be carried out.

An individual risk assessment will be carried out for all pupils whose SEN and/or disability are associated with:

- Communication impairments that make them less responsive to verbal communication
- Physical disabilities and/or sensory impairments
- Conditions that make them fragile, such as haemophilia, brittle bone syndrome or epilepsy
- Dependence on equipment such as wheelchairs, breathing or feeding tubes.

Using force

Before using force, staff should engage the pupil in a calm and measured tone, making clear that their behaviour is unacceptable and setting out how the pupil could choose to change their behaviour. Staff should not give the impression of acting out of anger or frustration, or to punish a pupil, and should make it clear that they only intend to use physical intervention as a last resort to ensure that the situation is addressed as safely as possible. The use of force must always be proportionate to the level of risk and should always be reduced at the earliest possible time.

Force may be used for two different purposes:

1. To control – either passive physical contact (e.g. standing between pupils) or active physical contact (e.g. leading the pupil by the hand or the arm)
2. To restrain using restraint techniques. This can involve using appropriate restrictive holds, which may require expertise or training. Parental consent is not required to restrain a pupil.

Staff training

The staff induction process will set out staff member's responsibilities in relation to the PRU policy on the use of force. Staff will receive accredited training in the chosen approach approved by the PRU. Staff who have not received accredited training are

not precluded from using reasonable force where needed. Risk assessments and procedures will be included on staff meeting agendas at least once a term.

Recording Incidents

The Executive Headteacher, or in their absence the site lead, in consultation with the members of staff involved in the incident, will determine whether the incident should be deemed 'significant'. This decision will consider:

- a) The pupil's behaviour and the level of risk presented at the time
- b) The degree of force used and whether it was proportionate in relation to the behaviour
- c) The effect on the pupil or member of staff
- d) The age of the child
- e) Any special educational need or disability or other social factors which might be relevant.

and take account of:

- a) An incident where unreasonable use of force is used on a pupil would always be a significant incident
- b) Any incident where substantial force has been used (e.g. physically pushing a pupil out of a room) would be significant
- c) The use of a restraint technique is significant
- d) An incident where a child was very distressed (though clearly not over-reacting) would be significant.

All significant incidents where physical force has been used will be recorded with relevant details on CPOMs (system records) for data analysis. The record must be made as soon as practical after the incident. SLT and Steps tutors will review records and ensure lessons and any changes in approach are shared with all PRU colleagues. All information will be treated in confidence. The record will form part of the child's educational record and is open to inspection by parents.

Reporting incidents

All significant incidents where physical force has been used will be reported to parents. The record must be made as soon as practical after the incident. If it is likely that reporting the incident to a parent will result in significant harm to the pupil, then the incident should be reported to the safeguarding team at County. The information will be treated in confidence.

Post incident support

The PRU will ensure that staff and pupils affected by an incident have continuing support for as long as necessary in respect of:

- Physical consequences
- Support to deal with any emotional stress or loss of confidence
- Opportunity to analyse, reflect and learn from the incident.

Complaints and allegations

Complaints will be dealt with under the PRU's complaints procedures. Parents and pupils have a right to complain about actions taken by PRU staff. If a specific allegation is made against a member of staff then the PRU will follow guidance set out in 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education.'

Signed:
(Chair of Management Committee)

Date:.....



Signed:
(Executive Headteacher)

Date: 23/4/25