



SIKH ACADEMIES TRUST  
Faith Inspired Education

# **SAT USE OF REASONABLE FORCE POLICY**

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## 1. Summary

The use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions can have a significant impact on the pupils, staff members and parents involved, as well as the wider classroom. However, there are times when the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions will be lawful; for example, to keep individuals and the wider school community safe.

## 2. Status of this guidance

SAT has regard to the statutory guidance in relation to recording and reporting each significant incident involving the use of force by members of staff.

## 3. Terminology

**Reasonable force:** Physical contact by a member of staff on a pupil to control or restrain their actions/movements. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances. Any use of reasonable force is an example of a restrictive intervention and may or may not involve the use of restraint.

**Restrictive interventions:** Any planned or reactive action which limits a pupil's movement, liberty or freedom to act independently. Restrictive interventions may include use of equipment, medication or seclusion. Restrictive interventions may or may not involve the use of reasonable force.

**Restraint:** A form of restrictive intervention involving direct physical contact and force where the intention is to prevent, restrict, or subdue movement of the body, or part of the body, of a pupil. Restraint may also include mechanical or chemical restraint. Restraint may or may not involve the use of force.

**Seclusion:** means the supervised confinement and isolation of a pupil, away from other pupils, in an area from which the pupil is prevented from leaving of their own free will.

## 4. Using reasonable force

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances.

Staff who are likely to need to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions are adequately trained in its safe and lawful use and in preventative strategies. School leaders make decisions on training based on their school's individual contexts and needs.

Employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees. Therefore, SAT carries out risk assessments to ensure that staff who regularly work alongside pupils where the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions may be required can do so as safely as possible.

## 5. Understanding when to use reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions

The decision on whether it is reasonable to use force and/or other restrictive interventions depends on the individual circumstances of each situation. In assessing whether force and/or other restrictive interventions are reasonable in a situation, the member of staff should use their professional judgement.

a) Factors staff need to consider include: Is it necessary?

Staff should consider whether there are reasonable alternative ways to manage a situation and achieve the desired outcome. Staff should assess whether the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks, or whether its use would escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the consequences of the behaviour that it intends to address.

Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment. Reasonable force may be used to prevent or stop a pupil from causing injury to themselves or others, committing a criminal offence, damaging property, or doing something that prejudices discipline at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

*b) Factors staff need to consider include: Is it proportionate?*

Staff should use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce the relevant risks. Staff should consider the personal circumstances of the pupil such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the Equality Act 2010.

*c) Factors staff need to consider include: Have you considered the pupil's welfare?*

Staff should consider the impact on the pupil's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. For example, pupils who have experienced an adverse life event, with diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, past trauma or neglect, communication difficulties, or other needs, may find the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions particularly distressing.

Staff should seek to maintain respect for a pupil's dignity. This may include, where possible, considering the location and environment where any intervention is used, such as in front of their peers.

Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the pupil what is happening, why, and explain what the pupil needs to do. For pupils with difficulties with speech, language and communication, or with English as an additional language, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies should be used to ensure the pupil understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.

Staff should seek to understand how the pupil is feeling and use this information to determine whether the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped.

## **6. Pupil and staff support**

Following each significant incident involving the use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive intervention, schools will evaluate the incident to understand why reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions were used, the impact on pupils and staff, any patterns and trends, and how the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions might be avoided in future, for example by amending or introducing a behaviour support plan.

If necessary, the pupil and staff member involved should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible.

## **7. Incident Reporting in Schools**

Any significant incident in which a member of staff uses reasonable force on a pupil must be recorded as described in 'Recording the use of force' (see section x of this policy) . In addition, any injuries should be recorded in accordance with the school's procedures and reported as appropriate to the Health and Safety Executive.

Following a significant incident in which reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions are used, schools should hold a follow-up conversation(s) to facilitate reflection, learning and to support pupil and staff wellbeing.

This conversation should be framed as part of the overall debriefing process and look to understand what happened during the incident and why, based on separate reflections from both the staff and pupils involved; as well as to repairing and rebuilding relationships through dialogue. This process should ideally be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident and may also benefit from the presence of an additional person to ensure impartiality and support.

By engaging in this process, schools can foster a culture of continuous improvement and consider how things might be improved in the future.

Additionally, any pupil who witnesses an incident of reasonable force and/or restrictive intervention where a peer may have been injured or become distressed, should also be provided with appropriate support where necessary.

## **8. Use of reasonable force to search pupils**

Head teachers and staff they authorise have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item.

A member of staff can use such force as is reasonable to search for legally prohibited items, but not to search for items banned under the school rules only. The decision to use reasonable force should be made on a case-by-case basis.

### Unacceptable uses of force

School staff must never use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment. Pupils should not be deliberately restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation, for example, by covering the mouth and/or nose or applying pressure to the neck region or abdomen.

Where needed, the pupil should receive a medical assessment and treatment for any injuries as soon as possible. For any form of restraint, including seated and standing, there is a risk of physical and psychological harm, and it should be avoided where possible.

### Other physical contact with pupils

There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to have some physical contact with pupils which does not give rise to any question over the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions. This will depend on the circumstance, but examples of occasions when physical contact is generally appropriate include:

- to give first aid

- to guide or escort pupils, e.g. holding the hand of a pupil at the front/back of the line when going to assembly, when walking together around the school or on a school trip, or when helping a pupil to a space they have chosen to access to self-regulate
- to comfort a distressed pupil
- to congratulate or praise a pupil, e.g. a pat on the back or a handshake
- to demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- to demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching
- In assessing whether physical contact is appropriate in a given situation, the member of staff should use their judgement, having regard to SAT policies.

## **9. Policy and practice**

This policy aligns with the school's legal duties including those relating to the recording and reporting of significant incidents where a member of staff uses force on a pupil.

The policy emphasises the importance of prevention and de-escalation as a means of minimising the need to use reasonable force and other restrictive interventions.

### Whole-school measures include:

- consideration of how the school and classroom environment can support all pupils
- to achieve and thrive
- sharing best practice for whole-class behaviour management, and for managing
- communal spaces such as corridors and playgrounds
- training staff in effective communication strategies, such as using appropriate tone
- of voice and empathy to aid de-escalation
- development of working staff-pupil relationships and trust
- recording and analysing data on the use of reasonable force and other restrictive
- interventions to inform improvement planning

### Individual approaches include:

- working closely with parents to support individual pupils
- strategies to support individual pupils based on their identified needs, including the development of behaviour support plans.
- giving pupils time, space and strategies to calm down before their behaviour
- escalates

School leaders ensure that this policy is made available to all staff, pupils and parents.

## **10. Consideration for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)**

Some children and young people with SEND may react to distressing or confusing situations by displaying behaviours which may be harmful to themselves and others. Triggers may include pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar situations or environments or feelings of fear and anxiety. In particular, pupils who find verbal communication challenging may express their needs, discomfort or confusion through actions. Schools should seek to understand the underlying triggers of challenging behaviour so that they can provide proactive support, create an inclusive environment and consider the impact of school policies on pupils with SEND.

Schools should utilise staff who know individual pupils well to help identify and manage risk such as trigger points when challenging behaviour is more likely to occur, and develop proactive strategies to reduce the likelihood of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions being used.

They should also work with the pupil, parents and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies. Depending on the circumstances, examples of strategies may include:

- removing stimuli that may be causing distress
- changing body language, facial expression, and/or tone of voice
- supporting the pupil to express their emotions before getting overwhelmed
- engaging the pupil in an activity which can help them manage their feelings of
- anxiety
- distracting the pupil in something that interests them or by introducing familiar objects and activities to redirect their attention

Behaviour support plans should outline any adjustments, such as to address aspects of the school environment which the pupil finds challenging and ways for pupils to communicate their needs effectively.

Behaviour support plans should detail circumstances where it may be appropriate for staff to have increased physical contact with a pupil. This should be discussed in conjunction with the relevant persons, such as teachers, parents, the pupil, pastoral staff or health professionals, and parameters around its use stated clearly in the plan.

Any behaviour support plans should be reviewed with the pupil and their parent periodically and following any significant incident, so that changes can be made based on evidence of what has worked and what has not worked in practice for the individual pupil.

Where a pupil has a disability, the school has a duty under the Equality Act 2010, to take reasonable steps to avoid disadvantage and ensure that the pupil can fully participate in the education provided by the school, and that they can enjoy the other benefits, facilities and services that the school provides for pupils.

## **11. Recording and reporting the use of force by members of staff:**

### **Recording the use of force (statutory guidance)**

SAT ensures that a procedure is in place for recording each significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil. Incidents must be recorded by the staff member(s) involved as soon as practicable after the event.

The procedure must require that a record of any such incident is made in writing as soon as practicable after the incident.

Staff should record the following details as a minimum:

- names of pupil and staff directly involved
- any relevant needs or circumstances of the pupil, including whether the pupil involved has an identified special educational need or disability and their SEN status code
- time, date, location and approximate length of time the intervention was used

- brief account of the incident, including what led up to the incident, identified or potential triggers if known, any preventative or de-escalation strategies used, what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance
- any post-incident support, such as details of any medical treatment for injuries or other adverse impacts

## **12. Reporting the use of force (statutory guidance)**

SAT ensures that a procedure is in place for reporting each significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil to each parent of the pupil as soon as practicable after the incident, except where it appears to the staff member that doing so would be likely to result in significant harm to the pupil. This includes all forms of abuse and neglect. In this instance, the staff member must report the incident to the local authority within whose area the pupil is ordinarily resident.

A report of the incident made to parents should include the following details as a minimum:

- time, date, location and approximate length of time the force was used
- brief account of what type of reasonable force was applied, and the degree of force
- details of any physical injuries sustained, if applicable
- brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary in that instance.

SAT leaders choose how best to communicate this information to parents. For example, via phone call, email or online messaging system.

## **13. Guidance for governing bodies and proprietors on using data on reasonable force and other restrictive interventions**

SAT takes all reasonable steps to ensure that SAT's procedure for recording and reporting the use of force is complied with. We regularly review and interrogate data on reasonable force and other restrictive interventions to:

- identify and implement improvements to policies and practices
- identify areas of learning and development for school staff
- understand pupils' repeat patterns and triggers to interrogate the effectiveness of pupil support measures, share this information with teachers who work with those pupils to better support them and, where appropriate, their parents, to establish a behaviour support plan or revise an existing plan.
- identify any disproportionate use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive
- interventions in relation to pupils who share protected characteristics, have SEN, or other types of vulnerability.

Analysis is proportionate and avoid over-interpreting small subgroups of people.

## **14. Complaints and allegations**

Any complaints regarding the use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions are dealt with in accordance with the school's normal complaints procedure.

If an allegation regarding inappropriate use of force and/or other restrictive interventions is made against a member of staff, the procedures in Keeping Children Safe in Education are followed.