



## ROWDEFORD SCHOOL

### POLICY ON REASONABLE FORCE AND SERIOUS INCIDENTS

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

This policy provides a framework for the use of reasonable force and physical intervention within Rowdeford School.

This policy takes into account information provided in:

- Circular 10/98 (Section 550A of the Education Act 1996)
- DFES 'Guidance on the Use of Restrictive Physical Interventions for Staff Working with Children and Adults who Display Extreme Behaviour in Association with Learning Disability and / or Autistic Spectrum Disorders'
- Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards – Inspection Regulations - Care Standards Act 2000
- DfE 'Behaviour and Discipline in Schools – Advice for Headteachers and school staff', February 2014
- DfE 'Use of Reasonable Force. Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies', July 2013
- DfE 'Behaviour and Discipline in Schools', February 2014

Rowdeford School has a robust Behaviour Policy and a values based ethos, in which respect is a fundamental element. The school's response to serious incidents reflects this and the use of reasonable force is a last resort when all other de-escalation strategies have failed. Any use of force, for control or restraint, is used as infrequently as possible, for the best interests of all parties and will endeavour to retain the dignity of all. Any use of force must be 'reasonable' which means it will depend on the particular circumstances, be proportionate to the consequences it is intended to prevent, account for the age and needs of the pupil, and be no more than is needed to achieve the intended outcome. Alongside the Department for Education, Rowdeford School recognises that while it can be challenging to always 'get it right' in difficult circumstances, the school expects reasonable, responsible and professional applications of the use of force, and reasoned judgements that adhere to the school's core values of cooperation, responsibility, happiness, resilience, respect and caring. All staff can expect their senior leaders to support them following a serious incident.

The school has a number of staff members who are trained in the Team Teacch method, which is the method approved by Wiltshire Local Authority; the aims and guidelines central to this approach are incorporated within the policy. All staff receive training about special educational needs and this includes de-escalation strategies and specialised strategies for meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

All staff with responsibility for children have the power to use reasonable force to prevent pupils:

- committing an offence.
- injuring themselves or others.
- damaging property.

jeopardising good order and discipline.

Fundamental to our respect for pupils is that force is a very last resort and therefore staff are encouraged to limit the use of force to the first two items in this list, except in exceptional circumstances.

In addition, head teachers and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for "prohibited items", for example knives, illegal drugs or pornographic images. However, force **cannot** be used to search for items banned under the school rules.

Rowdeford School recognises that although the use of reasonable force is a power not a duty, all staff have a duty of care towards the children in the school and the use of reasonable force may sometimes be a part of this e.g. to prevent injury.

Rowdeford School is clear with all staff members that it is an offence to lock a person in a room without a court order except in an emergency, for example where the use of a locked room is a temporary measure while seeking assistance. Locked includes another person holding a door shut.

Force cannot be used to enforce the use of Calm Zones or isolation except in an emergency to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others.

It is essential to have more than one adult present if a door is held in an emergency, and further assistance must be being sought, for example assistance from senior leadership, parents or the emergency services.

It is essential that any discussion about reasonable force is set in the wider context of education and behaviour management; it should not be seen as an isolated technique. The vast majority of the time there will be no need for physical intervention and other methods can be used.

## **2. THE LEGAL CONTEXT**

The document that concerns us most is Section 550A of the Education Act 1996. This led to Circular 10/98, which sets out guidelines for the use of reasonable force. This is used alongside the most current guidance from the DfE in 'The use of Reasonable Force. Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies', 2013.

A calm considered approach to the situation is needed. When circumstances justify, staff can:

- Physically interpose between pupils.
- Use holding, guiding or escorting.
- Lead a pupil by the arm.
- Guide or escort a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back.
- (In extreme circumstances) use more restrictive holds.
- Take any necessary action consistent with the concept of 'reasonable force'.

Types of incidents where the use of reasonable force may be necessary fall into three broad Categories:

1. Action due to imminent risk of injury
2. Action due to developing risk of injury or significant damage to property

3. Action where a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline.

#### EXAMPLES OF 1 AND 2

- A pupil attacks a member of staff or another pupil.
- A pupil is engaged in, or on the verge of, starting to damage property.
- A pupil is running up and down a corridor in a way that could cause injury
- A pupil is absconding (NB - this only applies if the child is **at risk** if they leave the room/building).

#### EXAMPLES OF 3

- A pupil persistently refuses to leave the room
- A pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting the lesson.

### 3. ACCEPTED PHYSICAL INTERVENTIONS USED

Listed below are the accepted Team Teach strategies that have been taught to specific staff.

a) A range of personal safety responses to deal with:

- Wrist and hair grabs
- Neck holds
- Bear-hugs and bites
- Punches and kicks
- Separating fighting pupils

b) A range of guides, escorts and holds, ranging from least intrusive to most intrusive.

These provide a graded and gradual response aimed at intervening with the appropriate amount of reasonable force. Holds where 2 people are used will be deemed as more restrictive. As the amount of restriction / number of people increases so does the risk; staff need to make a risk assessment based on the situation as to the level at which they are going to intervene.

Ground Recovery holds are the most restrictive and carry the highest risk. Rowdeford staff have not been taught floor holds as they are highly unlikely to be appropriate to our cohort of pupils and staff are strongly discouraged from going to ground. Exceptions may be if the child is already on the floor when a physical intervention has begun, or circumstances are of such high risk that the ground recovery strategy is perceived and documented as being the only appropriate strategy to employ.

It must also be noted here that staff will not use advanced techniques beyond their training. Rowdeford School is also aware of the methods that have been identified as being of 'unacceptable risk' (Use of reasonable force in schools, DfE, July 2013). These are the 'seated double embrace', 'double basket hold' and the 'nose distraction technique'. These methods have **never** been part of practice at Rowdeford School. Training on physical intervention given to specified staff will include sections on the background, theory and rationale behind the Team Teach approach, as well as an understanding of personal space and body language, before any physical techniques are taught.

Any use of force must always take account of a pupil's age, cultural and religious background, gender, stature, special educational needs and disabilities, and medical history

#### **4. PLACING THE USE OF FORCE AND PHYSICAL INTERVENTION IN CONTEXT**

The use of force and physical intervention is the absolute last resort when staff are dealing with an incident or situation at Rowdeford School. Physical intervention is one of many strategies that staff can employ to de-escalate a situation, and will only be used when all other strategies have failed or the situation requires a rapid physical response (see below).

The use of force can be placed into 2 broad categories:

##### **1) EMERGENCY INTERVENTIONS**

Emergency interventions will involve staff employing, where necessary, the use of reasonable force in response to an incident. This will occur when all other strategies have been exhausted or the incident requires a rapid physical response (for example a pupil being at risk of running on to a road).

##### **2) PLANNED INTERVENTIONS**

Planned interventions involve staff employing, where necessary, one or a combination of strategies as an agreed response to an identified serious behaviour aligned to the acceptable reasons for the use of force i.e. committing an offence, injuring themselves or others, damaging property or jeopardising good order and discipline.

This will be documented in a Positive Handling Plan and will be reviewed 3 times per year. Positive handling plans will be given to parents / carers and their views sought. . The Positive Handling Plan will list the accepted physical intervention strategies to be used, as well as strategies that may be used beforehand. Strategies that are known to be counterproductive for the specific pupil will also be detailed.

At Rowdeford School all staff are made aware of the many strategies available to them and that the use of reasonable force is the very last resort with regard to behaviour management. Below is a list of de-escalation strategies utilised by our staff (please note that this list is not exhaustive):

- Specialised and personalised strategies in keeping with a pupil's special educational needs.
- Guidance to use a Calm Zone.
- Planned ignoring of a specific behaviour.
- Non-verbal/visual signals and instructions.
- Appropriate seating.
- Distraction techniques.
- Use of positive encouragement and praise.
- Clear boundaries on behaviour.
- Clear classroom rules.
- Personal verbal instructions.
- Two positive choices.
- Clarity about outcomes of the choices that they are making.
- Reassurance that adults will help them.
- Emotion Coaching.
- Change of adult(s).

Preventative Strategies need to be:

- Clear and understood by all those who come into contact with the pupil.
- Based on thoughts / discussion about possible reasons for challenging behaviour.
- Where possible the functional opposite of the behaviour (functionally incompatible) we are trying to stop should be encouraged, eg as simple as if a pupil is constantly hitting someone else then we need to aim for them to be sitting in their seat (if they are in their seat they can't be hitting someone)

Reactive Strategies need to be :

- Clear and understood by all those who come into contact with the individual.
- Manageable.
- Focused on the behaviour, not the child.
- Flexible.
- Aimed at de-escalation, safety and dignity.

We also believe that environment and curriculum play a part in reducing the use of force. Therefore, we endeavour to ensure that our curriculum meets the needs of pupils at Rowdeford School, and that our environment is appropriate to pupils' physical, cultural, spiritual, moral and social needs.

## **5. RISK ASSESSMENT**

In the case of emergency interventions, staff will make a risk assessment at the time comparing the risks associated with intervention against the risks of not intervening.

In the case of planned interventions, the pupil's tutor team will meet to create the pupil's Positive Handling Plan. These are overseen by the Deputy Headteacher and shared with parents/carers, teachers and teaching assistants.

Pupil concerns will be discussed as appropriate e.g. in Senior Leadership /Leadership /Teacher/Teaching Assistant Team Meetings, staff briefings, multi-agency meetings and any new Personal Handling Plans or actions required will be undertaken.

## **6. REPORTING AND MONITORING OF INCIDENTS**

Reporting and monitoring is of paramount importance for a number of reasons:

- Protection for staff and pupils.
- Keeping a record of incidents so times/areas that most incidents occur can be tracked.

Immediately after the incident the Headteacher or one of the Deputy Headteachers should be informed. This will allow a senior leader to review what has happened and if appropriate talk to the pupil involved, and inform parents/carers of the incident and the use of force. While schools are enabled by the Department of Education to decide whether to report incidents to parents and carers, the view of Rowdeford School is that parents and carers should always be informed when the use of force has occurred and we will endeavour to achieve this on the same day as the incident.

Following an incident that involves the use of force, the staff member involved should ensure that the following are completed:

- **Serious Incident Record Book**
- **Record of Incident Involving Restrictive Physical Intervention**

It is essential that any pupils involved in the use of restrictive force have the opportunity to have their views recorded.

The necessary record books can be found in the School Office and must be returned as soon as possible. They must not be taken off of the school site.

Please see Post Physical Intervention Procedures below.

## **7. TRAINING AND AUTHORISATION OF STAFF**

All staff who have satisfactorily completed Team Teach training are authorised to use Team Teach interventions. A list of staff who have completed this training is held in the school office and with the Deputy Headteacher responsible for continued professional development. Once staff have received their full training, top-up training will take place every three years. All staff, regardless of whether they have received Team Teach training, have the right, under the law, to use reasonable force as detailed in this policy.

## **8. POST PHYSICAL INTERVENTION PROCEDURES**

When both the staff member and pupil involved are calm, a debrief needs to take place. This should include (if appropriate) a discussion about strategies that the pupil could use in the future. This should be facilitated by a member of the Leadership Team.

Completed records are kept in the School Office and monitored weekly by the Deputy Headteacher. The Headteacher reports termly to the Full Governing Body about incidents involving the use of reasonable force.

## **9. SERIOUS INCIDENTS**

Rowdeford School will not accept any aggressive or violent behaviour towards any pupils or member of staff.

If a member of staff experiences such behaviour as to cause hurt or distress then the member of staff should inform the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher as soon as possible. The member of staff, with assistance from the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher, should complete the appropriate records that are kept in the School Office.

## **10. REVIEWING THE POLICY**

The Headteacher/Governors will review procedures and PHPs following any serious incidents and at pupils annual reviews.

*This policy was reviewed in January 2017 and endorsed by the Governing Body at their meeting 6<sup>th</sup> February 2017*

Signed: ..... Date: .....  
(Clerk to Governors)