

# ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

## POLICY ON: Use of Reasonable Force

**School Mission Statement:** *“To guide and encourage students to be responsible, caring and confident in a climate of Gospel values where they can realise their full potential and celebrate each other’s success”.*

With due consideration to the wellbeing of all members of the school community, it may be necessary to physically restrain pupils using due reasonable force.

### 1. Use of Force

Staff can use reasonable force if:

- a criminal offence is being committed
- a pupil might injure themselves or someone else
- a pupil is damaging property – including their own property
- a pupil’s behaviour is preventing staff from keeping order

Staff may need to use reasonable force if a pupil

- attacks a member of staff or another pupil(s)
- is fighting with another pupil
- is damaging or about to damage property
- is causing or is at risk of causing injury or damage by rough play or by misuse of dangerous materials
- is running in a corridor or on stairs and might cause an accident that could injure themselves or others
- tries to leave school and could be at risk if she leaves
- persistently refuses to obey an order to leave a classroom
- is seriously disrupting a lesson

### 2. What Is considered reasonable?

This depends on the situation. It is best to take the common sense approach bearing in mind the following points:

1. Only use force when you have tried to calm things down by talking.
2. Use force in proportion to the situation
3. The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgment of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.
  - a vicious fight involving weapons would strongly justify strong force to control it
  - a disruptive pupil who refuses to leave class may warrant a touch on the back to have them leave the room
4. Use minimum amount of force to restore order.
5. Degree of force should reflect the age, understanding and sex of the pupil.

### 3. Force that can be used:

- coming physically between pupils
- blocking a pupil's path
- holding, pushing or pulling
- leading a pupil by the hand or arm
- shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back

#### NEVER

- hold a pupil around the neck or collar
- slap, punch or kick
- twist or force limbs
- trip a pupil up
- hold or pull hair or ear
- hold a pupil face down on the ground

Schools can use reasonable force to:

- Remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so.
- Prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school trip or visit;
- Prevent a pupil leaving the classroom where allowing the pupil to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others.
- Prevent a pupil from attacking a member of staff or another pupil, or to stop a fight in the playground;
- Restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

#### **Schools cannot use force as a punishment.**

**Power to search pupils without** consent in addition to the general power to use reasonable force described above, Head teachers and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for the following "prohibited items":

- Knives and weapons.
- Alcohol.
- Illegal Drugs.
- Stolen items.
- Tobacco and cigarette papers.
- Fireworks.
- Pornographic images.
- Any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property.

All staff in school are authorised to use reasonable force within these guidelines.

#### **4. Dealing with an Incident**

1. Tell the pupil who is misbehaving (or is harming themselves) that they must stop. If they do not choose to stop, inform them that we will physically restrain them.
2. If you need to use force to control the pupil, speak to the pupil and make clear that physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as it is no longer necessary. Approach the incident calmly.
3. If possible, use your whistle to signal that assistance is needed. Call for help from colleagues, use pupils or phone if necessary.
4. Remove all other pupils who are at risk from the scene if possible, until help arrives.
5. Until help arrives continue to talk calmly to the pupils.

#### **5. After the Incident**

1. Call First Aid if appropriate.
2. Tell a senior member of staff.
3. If you are injured tell a staff member, go home, seek a doctor and ask for written record of the injuries.
4. If the incident is serious seek professional association advice.
5. Make a note of what happened.
6. Senior staff will ask for a written report

#### **6. What the report should include**

- name of all pupils, witnesses and adult involved
- time and place of incident
- the reason for force being used
- how the incident began and progressed, pupil's behaviour, what was said by both parties, steps to defuse situation, degree of force used, details of injuries to staff and pupils

Senior teachers will inform parents of pupil involvement and will inform the Governors.

#### **7. Recording the Incident**

A written report of all incidents where force or restraint has been used must be done as soon as possible. The report will include signed witness statements for all staff and pupils involved.

The Local Authority monitors and records numbers of incidents relating to violence in the classroom on a termly basis.

#### **8. Formal Complaints**

Any complaint follows the school's formal complaints procedure. Here the facts will be examined by the Head teacher and if the course of action taken was in

accordance with school policy and that in the circumstances there was no other reasonable course of action open to the staff member.

The Head teacher will notify the complaint to the Governors.

If, as a result of the investigation, the Head teacher's conclusion is that disciplinary action should be taken, it will follow disciplinary procedures.

## 9. **Child Protection Procedures**

If there is an allegation of physical or abuse, the Head teacher or Police may refer the matter to the Social Services for investigation under Child Protection Procedures.

### **Communication – The schools approach to its use of force.**

- The governing body expects the behaviour policies to include the power to use reasonable force.
- Any use of reasonable force must make reasonable adjustment for disabled children and children with SEND.
- Parental consent is not required to use force and parents are to be made aware of school policy on the use of force.

### **Staff Training**

- The principles of Team Teach and its philosophy of de-escalation of incidents before use of force are the key principles of the schools behaviour policy and use of restraint.
- Team Teach training will be offered to all staff on a rolling basis.
- However, the use of reasonable force is not the responsibility of Team Teach trained staff. All staff have the right and responsibility to use reasonable force should the circumstances warrant it. (As outlined within this policy).