

01 What is 'reasonable force'?

The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with students. Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a pupil to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.

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07 Further info

For further information and frequently asked questions, please visit:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444051/Use_of_reasonable_force_advice_Reviewed_July_2015.pdf



03 Who can use reasonable force?

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force. This power applies to any member of staff at the school. It can also apply to people whom the headteacher has temporarily put in charge of students such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying students on a school organised visit. School staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the student.

Schools cannot use force as a punishment – it is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

06 Power to search pupils

Headteachers 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.

05 Schools can use reasonable force to:

Remove disruptive children from the classroom where they have refused to do so; prevent a pupil behaving in a way that disrupts a school event or a school 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; restrain a pupil at risk of harming themselves.

04 When can it be used?

Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder. In a school, force is used for two main purposes – to control pupils or to restrain them. The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.