



**BRITISH SCHOOL  
OF GENEVA**

## **SAFE TOUCH POLICY**

**Implementation Date** – September 2024

**Review Date** – July 2025

**Signed** : Simon Thompson, Principal

**Physical Restraint should be limited to emergency situations and used only in the last resort. No member of staff at BSG may use any degree of physical contact which is deliberately intended to punish a student or which is primarily intended to cause pain or injury or humiliation. This ban is absolute. It applies regardless of the seriousness of the student's misbehaviour or the degree of provocation.**

It enables teachers and other members of staff in the school, authorised by the Principal, to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances, to prevent a student from:

- Committing an offence as outlined below
- Causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the student himself)
- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among its students, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

## Definition of restraint at British School Geneva

Physical restraint is the positive application of force with the intention of protecting the child from harming themselves or others or seriously damaging property.

## When might it be appropriate to use reasonable force?

Examples of situations that may require restraint are when:

- a student attacks a member of staff, or another student
- students fighting
- a student is causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials, substances or objects
- a student is running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way in which he/she might have or cause an accident likely to injure her/himself or others
- a student absconding from a class or trying to leave school (NB this will only apply if a student could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school)
- a student persistently refuses to obey an order to leave an area which would cause physical danger.

## General policy aims

Staff at **British School Geneva** recognises that the use of reasonable force is only used as a last resort following a range of strategies available to secure student safety / well-being and also to maintain good order and discipline. Our policy on restraint should therefore be read in conjunction with our Code of Conduct, Behaviour and Safeguarding policies.

## Specific aims of the safe touch policy

- To protect every person in the school community from harm
- To protect all students against any form of physical intervention that is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful
- To provide adequate information for staff so that they are clear as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour and to deal effectively with violent or potentially violent situations

## Why use restraint?

Physical restraint should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a child's action or perhaps by removing a physical object, which could be used to harm him / herself or others. It is only likely to be needed if a child appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and behaviour.

It is not possible to define every circumstance in which physical restraint would be necessary or appropriate and staff will have to exercise their own judgement in situations which arise within the above categories. Staff should always act within the School's policy on behaviour and discipline, particularly in dealing with disruptive behaviour.

Staff should be aware that when they are in charge of children during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are acting in loco parentis and should, therefore, take reasonable action to ensure students' safety and well-being.

Failure to physically restrain a student who is subsequently injured or injures another, could, in certain circumstances, lead to an accusation of negligence. At the same time staff are not expected to place themselves in situations where they are likely to suffer injury as a result of their intervention.

## Alternative strategies

There are some situations in which the need for physical restraint is immediate and where there are no equally effective alternatives (e.g. is a student about to run across a road). However, in many circumstances there are alternatives e.g. use of assertiveness skills such as:

- the broken record in which an instruction is repeated until the student complies
- use of a distracter, such as a loud whistle, to interrupt the behaviour (such as a fight) long enough for other methods of verbal control to be effective
- withdrawal of attention (audience) e.g. if an action such as damage to property is threatened
- other techniques designed to defuse the situation, such as the avoidance of confrontation, or use of humour (in these cases the incident can be dealt with later when emotions are no longer running high)

- the employment of other sanctions consistent with the School's policy on behaviour.

## Use of physical restraint

Physical restraint should be applied as an act of care and control with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the student to regain self-control. It should never take a form which could be seen as a punishment.

Staff are only authorised to use reasonable force in applying physical restraint. There is no absolute definition of this, as what constitutes reasonable force depends upon the particular situation and the student to whom it is being applied. However, as a general rule, only the force necessary to stop or prevent poor behaviour should be used, in accordance with the guidelines below.

There are some forms of physical intervention, which may involve minimal physical contact, such as blocking a student's path or the staff member physically interposing him or herself between the student and another student or object. However, in some circumstances, direct physical contact may be necessary. In all circumstances other methods should be used if appropriate and effective physical restraint should be a last resort.

## When physical restraint becomes necessary

### DO

- Tell the student what you are doing and why
- Use the minimum force necessary
- Involve another member of staff if possible
- Tell the student what s/he must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition)
- Use simple and clear language
- Hold limbs above a major joint if possible e.g. above the elbow
- Relax your restraint in response to the student's compliance

### DON'T

- Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the student
- Attempt to reason with the student
- Involve other students in the restraint
- Touch or hold the student in sexual areas
- Twist or force limbs back against a joint
- Bend fingers or pull hair
- Hold the student in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing  
E.g. around the neck
- Slap, punch, kick or trip up the student

## Actions after an incident

Physical restraint often occurs in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for the staff involved and the student. The Principal should be informed of any incident as soon as possible and will take responsibility for making arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised. The Principal or Head of Department should always be involved in debriefing the student involved and any victims of the incident should be offered support, and their parents informed.

If the behaviour is part of an ongoing pattern it may be necessary to address the situation through the development of a PSP, which may include an anger management programme, or other strategies agreed by the SENDCO or Heads of Pastoral Care.

It is also helpful to consider the circumstances precipitating the incident to explore ways in which future incidents can be avoided.

All incidents should be recorded immediately by the member/members of staff involved in the incident. All sections of this report should be completed so that in the event of any future complaint a full record is available. The Principal or Head of Department (at the direction of the Principal) will contact parents as soon as possible after an incident, normally on the same day, to inform them of the actions that were taken and why, and to provide them with an opportunity to discuss it. Reports should be completed on MyConcern to the attention of the Principal and Heads of Pastoral Care.

These will be reported to ISP Regional Manager as part of the Head's Report.

## **Risk Assessments**

If we become aware that a student is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, we will plan how to respond if the situation arises. Such planning will address:

- Management of the student (e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict, holds to be used if necessary)
- Involvement of parents to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might need to take
- Briefing of staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training or guidance)
- Identification of additional support that can be summoned if appropriate

## **Complaints**

A clear restraint policy, adhered to by all staff and shared with parents, should help to avoid complaints from parents. It is unlikely to prevent all complaints, however, a dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation.

It is our intention to inform all staff, students and parents about these procedures and the context in which they apply.

### **Physical contact with students in other circumstances**

There are situations in which physical contact with a student may be appropriate or necessary.

Examples of where touching a student might be proper or necessary:

- Holding the hand of the child at the front/back of the line when going to assembly, library or when walking together around the school
- When comforting a distressed student, (Teachers will use their own professional judgement when they feel a student needs this kind of support)
- When a student is being congratulated or praised
- To demonstrate how to use a musical instrument
- To demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE lessons or sports coaching
- To give first aid
- If necessary as outlined in the Intimate Care Policy

There may be some students for whom touching is particularly unwelcome. It is important that all staff receive information on these children. In addition, the school will need to develop clear common practice in relation to particular groups of children and situations. For example, students from some minority groups may be particularly sensitive to physical contact by staff. Similarly, there should be a common approach where staff and students are of the opposite sex to each other. Physical contact between teachers and students becomes increasingly open to question as students reach and proceed through adolescence. Teachers should also bear in mind that even innocent and well-intentioned physical contact can sometimes be misconstrued.



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### **Record of Safe Touch Intervention**

Name of Child:	
Date of Incident:	
Where did the incident happen?	
Names of staff or students who witnessed:	
Why was force needed?	
How did the incident begin and progress? (who said what? Who did what?)	
What was done to calm things down?	
What degree of force was used? (What kind of hold? And for how long?)	
Students response:	
Details of injury or damage:	
Signed:	Date:
Principal/ Head of Section	Date: