

Use of Reasonable Force Policy

Legislation and Guidance that inform this document

- Use of Reasonable Force in Schools (Gov UK 2014)

Other Red Balloon policies to be read in conjunction with this one

- Behaviour for Learning
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Admissions
- Exclusion
- Dealing with Allegations of abuse against Staff

Statement of intent

Red Balloon seeks to ensure that all students are able to learn in a safe, secure environment. It is expected that 'use of force' will never be required, however, this policy describes practice in the extremely unlikely event that it may be.

Responsibility for Implementation

Headteachers must ensure that all staff are aware of their legal rights regarding 'use of force' and of Red Balloon guidelines for 'managing behaviour'. All staff are subsequently responsible for implementing practice that ensures the physical and emotional safety of all students.

Red Balloon practice

Red Balloon accepts the definition of reasonable force, including that of restraint, given in the Gov.UK 2014 guidance document. Any use of 'reasonable force' will always be reserved as a very last measure, and restraint will never be used as a matter of course. If staff deem that physical restraint is necessary, then (see Red Balloon's 'Behaviour for Learning Policy' and 'Exclusion Policy') that may be seen as an indicator either that the student is inappropriately placed with Red Balloon or that there is a need to educate the student away from the centre for a period of time.

We note that the 'right' to use 'reasonable force' applies to all staff (including volunteers) and to parents who may be working with students (accompanying them on a trip, for instance), and that such force may be used to prevent a student:

- hurting another member of the community;
- damaging property or the fabric of the building;
- causing 'disorder'.

Red Balloon will never consider the use of force of any sort as a punitive measure.

Red Balloon will ensure that commissioning agents are aware of its desire not to physically intervene to control student behaviour, certainly at more than a 'protective' level, and will also make this clear to parents/carers and students during discussions regarding the appropriateness of a referral.

Red Balloon also notes the right of staff to search students for possession of:

- 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.

Force may not be used to search for 'other' items banned under the centre rules.

Red Balloon acknowledges that centres should not operate an absolute 'no contact' policy, but remains committed to restricting any 'use of reasonable force' to the very lowest possible level, only using it to prevent harm to a member of the community, damage to property of a community member or damage to the fabric of the building. Staff will not be expected to remove a student from a classroom or other place: the flexibility provided by small numbers in class groups means that other action would be taken (eg other students could be moved).

Headteachers will monitor any staff concerns regarding student behaviour and ensure that staff feel confident in responding to behaviour at all times. Training can be provided in protective intervention or minimal 'use of force' with the emphasis upon minimal engagement and maximum care for student welfare.

Should any commissioning agent require staff to be trained in the 'use of reasonable force', then Red Balloon will ascertain what approach or approach the commissioning agent favours (if any), and ensure that the required training is undertaken.

Red Balloon staff maintain constant contact with parents/carers and will always contact them immediately if there is a significant incident, regardless of whether the staff response has involved any use of reasonable force.

There is a separate 'Allegations of Abuse against Staff' policy that deals with any complaint that a student might make regarding the use of force.

Lastly, Red Balloon notes that staff may make minimal and 'informed' (ie professionally appropriate) physical contact with students under the circumstances listed in the DfE guidance.

Policy updated Sept 2019 by Bob Sproson, Director of Education - for annual review.