BIG CREATIVE EDUCATION APPRENTICESHIPS TRAINING ACADEMY

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Search and Confiscate - REASONABLE FORCE POLICY

This policy applies and should be used in line with the following policies:
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Learning and Behaviour Policy

Approved By: Principal and Governing Body
Review Cycle: Annual
Next Review Date: September 2027

1. Policy Statement

Big Creative Academy (BCA) is committed to providing a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students, staff and visitors. The Academy recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances where the use of reasonable force is necessary to prevent injury, serious disruption or damage to property. This policy applies to both onsite and offsite activity organised and supervised by the Academy.

The Academy is committed to ensuring that any use of reasonable force is:

- Lawful
- Necessary
- Proportionate
- Reasonable in the circumstances
- The least restrictive option available

The welfare, dignity and rights of students will always remain central to any intervention. Staff will prioritise proactive behaviour management, relationship-based practice and de-escalation strategies before considering any physical intervention.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure the safety and welfare of students, staff and visitors.
- Provide clear guidance on the lawful use of reasonable force.
- Promote trauma-informed and safeguarding-led practice.
- Ensure compliance with statutory guidance and equality legislation.

- Establish clear recording, reporting and review procedures.
- Support staff to make appropriate decisions during incidents.

3. Legal Framework

This policy should be read alongside:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- BCA Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- BCA Learning and Behaviour Policy
- BCA SEND Policy
- BCA Health and Safety Policy

The Academy recognises its legal duty to record and report incidents involving the use of reasonable force and to ensure interventions are proportionate, necessary and in the best interests of the student.

4. Definition of Reasonable Force

Reasonable force covers a broad range of physical interventions used by staff to prevent a student from:

- Hurting themselves
- Hurting another person
- Damaging property
- Committing an offence
- Seriously disrupting learning
- Leaving a safe environment where doing so would place themselves or others at risk

There is no legal definition of "reasonable force". Whether force is reasonable depends on:

- The circumstances of the incident
- The age of the student
- The size and needs of the student
- The level of risk presented
- Whether the intervention is proportionate to the risk

5. Appropriate Physical Contact

Not all physical contact constitutes reasonable force.

Examples of appropriate day-to-day physical contact include:

- Administering first aid
- Guiding or escorting a student
- Assisting students with disabilities
- Comforting a distressed student where appropriate
- Congratulatory handshakes or similar low-level contact

Such contact should always be respectful, necessary and age-appropriate.

6. Principles of Trauma-Informed Practice

BCA recognises that behaviour may be a form of communication and that some students may have experienced trauma, adversity, exploitation or unmet needs.

Staff must:

- Seek to understand triggers to behaviour.
- Remain calm and regulated.
- Maintain student dignity.
- Use respectful and non-threatening communication.
- Consider SEND, mental health and safeguarding vulnerabilities.
- Prioritise relationship-based approaches.

Students with SEND, SEMH needs, EHCPs or known vulnerabilities may require adjustments to behaviour support and intervention planning.

7. De-escalation

The use of reasonable force must always be a last resort.

Staff must consider and, wherever possible, attempt de-escalation strategies before any physical intervention.

These may include:

- Verbal instructions
- Active listening
- Offering choices
- Redirection or distraction
- Time out or safe space
- Restorative discussion
- Removal of audience
- Support from trusted adults
- Emotional regulation strategies

If de-escalation is not successful and there is an immediate risk of harm, reasonable force may be used where necessary.

8. Use of Reasonable Force

Reasonable force may only be used when it is necessary to:

- Prevent injury to a student.
- Prevent injury to another person.
- Prevent significant damage to property.
- Prevent serious disruption.
- Prevent a student placing themselves at further risk.

Examples may include:

- Blocking a student's path.
- Separating students involved in a fight.
- Guiding or escorting a student.
- Preventing access to a dangerous situation.
- Moving students from an unsafe location.

Staff must avoid any intervention that is likely to cause injury, pain, humiliation or distress unless absolutely necessary to prevent greater harm.

8a. Reasonable Force During Searches and Confiscation

Big Creative Academy recognises that there may be occasions where reasonable force is required when exercising statutory powers to search students and confiscate prohibited items.

Any use of force during a search must be lawful, proportionate, necessary and reasonable in the circumstances. Staff must always consider whether there are alternative measures available before using physical intervention.

Statutory Powers

In accordance with current legislation, authorised staff may search a student without consent where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that they are in possession of a prohibited item. Prohibited items include:

- Knives or offensive weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Stolen items
- Fireworks
- Pornographic images
- Any item reasonably suspected of being used to commit an offence
- Any item reasonably suspected of causing injury to a person

- Any item reasonably suspected of causing damage to property

Authorised Staff

The following staff are authorised by the Principal to conduct searches where appropriate:

- Security Staff
- DSL's/Senior Leadership Team
- Duty Managers

Use of Reasonable Force During Searches

Reasonable force may be used only where:

- A lawful search is being undertaken.
- The student is refusing to cooperate.
- Staff have reasonable grounds to believe the student possesses a prohibited item.
- Failure to proceed would place the student or others at risk of harm.

Examples may include:

- Preventing a student from leaving while a search is lawfully being conducted.
- Preventing a student from disposing of a dangerous item.
- Blocking access to prohibited items.
- Escorting a student to a safe location for a search.
- Preventing immediate harm to others whilst an item is secured.

Any force used must be the minimum required to achieve the legitimate aim. Staff must cease intervention as soon as the risk has reduced.

Safeguarding and Dignity

Searches must be conducted with respect for the student's dignity, privacy and wellbeing.

Staff must:

- Use calm and respectful communication.
- Explain the reasons for the search.
- Consider the student's age, maturity and vulnerabilities.
- Consider SEND, safeguarding concerns and protected characteristics.
- Ensure the least intrusive intervention possible.

Where possible:

- The searching member of staff should be the same sex as the student.
- A witness should be present.
- The witness should, where possible, be the same sex as the student.

Strip Searches

Academy staff must never undertake a strip search.

A strip search is any search involving the removal of more than outer clothing and can only be conducted by police officers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE). Academy staff retain responsibility for safeguarding and advocating for the student's welfare throughout any police involvement. Parents or carers should be informed wherever appropriate and lawful to do so.

Recording and Reporting

Where reasonable force is used during a search or confiscation incident:

- A Reasonable Force Incident Report Form must be completed.
- The search must be recorded in accordance with Academy procedures.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed.
- Parents/carers should be notified as soon as reasonably practicable.
- Any safeguarding concerns arising from the incident must be recorded and acted upon.

Portable Knife Arch and Screening Procedures

Big Creative Academy may require students to participate in screening using handheld or walk-through metal detection systems as part of its safeguarding and violence prevention strategy. Students who refuse screening may be denied entry to the premises and managed in accordance with the Learning and Behaviour Policy. Screening is a non-contact process and does not constitute the use of reasonable force.

8b. Searching, Screening, Confiscation and Controlled Drugs

Principles

Big Creative Academy has a statutory duty to maintain a safe learning environment. Searches, screening procedures and confiscation of prohibited items form part of the Academy's safeguarding and behaviour management framework.

Any search, screening or confiscation activity must be:

- Lawful
- Necessary
- Proportionate
- Respectful of student dignity
- Conducted in accordance with safeguarding principles
- Sensitive to SEND, mental health, trauma and vulnerability factors

All actions taken by staff must be recorded appropriately and reviewed when required.

Screening Procedures

The Academy may require students to participate in screening procedures, including:

- Walk-through metal detector arches
- Handheld metal detector wands
- Bag screening where appropriate

Screening may be undertaken even where there is no suspicion that a student possesses a prohibited item.

Students who refuse screening may be refused entry to the premises and managed in accordance with the Learning and Behaviour Policy.

Screening is a non-contact safeguarding measure and does not constitute the use of reasonable force.

Searching Students

Authorised staff may search a student or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect possession of a prohibited item.

Possessions include:

- Bags
- Lockers
- Desks
- Coats
- Personal belongings under the student's control

Searches should wherever possible be carried out:

- By a member of staff of the same sex as the student
- In the presence of an appropriate witness
- Respectfully and discreetly
- With consideration for the student's age and vulnerabilities

Searches must never involve the removal of clothing other than outer clothing.

Prohibited Items

The Academy may search for and confiscate:

- Knives and offensive weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Suspected controlled drugs
- Stolen items
- Fireworks

- Pornographic images
- Tobacco products and vaping devices
- Any article used or likely to be used to commit an offence
- Any article used or likely to cause personal injury
- Any article used or likely to damage property
- Any other item banned under Academy rules where authorised within Academy policy.

Controlled Drugs and Suspected Illegal Substances

Where staff discover a suspected controlled drug:

Staff Must:

- Secure the substance immediately.
- Prevent student access to the substance.
- Inform a Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Director for Behaviour immediately.
- Record the circumstances of discovery.
- Store the substance securely until a decision is made regarding disposal or police involvement.

Staff Must Not:

- Taste, test or identify the substance themselves.
- Conduct any investigation beyond what is necessary for immediate safeguarding.
- Return any suspected illegal substance to a student.

The Academy will determine whether:

- The police should be contacted.
- A safeguarding referral is required.
- Parents or carers should be informed.
- External agency support is required.

Factors considered may include:

- Student age
- Quantity found
- Evidence of supply
- Whether exploitation is suspected
- Previous concerns
- Risk to others

Any suspected involvement in county lines, criminal exploitation or substance distribution will be managed in line with safeguarding procedures and may require immediate referral to external agencies.

Confiscation

Staff may confiscate any prohibited or banned item found during a search.

Confiscated items must be handled safely and in accordance with Academy procedures.

The Academy may:

- Retain the item temporarily
- Pass the item to the police
- Dispose of the item where legally permitted
- Return the item to a parent/carer where appropriate

Illegal substances, weapons and other dangerous items must not be returned to students.

Searches Involving Reasonable Force

Where a lawful search is necessary and a student refuses to cooperate, reasonable force may be used where:

- There are reasonable grounds to suspect possession of a prohibited item.
- There is an immediate risk of harm.
- The force used is proportionate and necessary.

Any use of force must comply with this Reasonable Force Policy and be recorded using the Academy's Reasonable Force Incident Report Form.

Strip Searches

Academy staff must never undertake a strip search.

A strip search is any search involving the removal of more than outer clothing and can only be conducted by police officers in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE).

Where police conduct a strip search on Academy premises:

- Staff retain safeguarding responsibilities.
- Student welfare and dignity must remain paramount.
- Parents/carers should be informed where appropriate and lawful.
- A safeguarding review will be completed following the incident.

The Academy will maintain records of any police-led strip searches conducted on site.

Recording and Monitoring

All searches involving:

- Prohibited items
- Controlled drugs
- Weapons
- Use of reasonable force
- Police involvement
- Significant safeguarding concerns

must be recorded on the Academy's safeguarding and behaviour management systems.

Records should include:

- The reason for the search
- Staff involved
- Outcome of the search
- Items found
- Any force used
- Safeguarding concerns identified
- Parent/carer communication
- Follow-up actions

The Designated Safeguarding Leads and Senior Leadership Team will monitor incidents to identify trends, vulnerabilities and areas requiring further intervention or staff training.

This addition will bring the policy into line with current DfE searching, screening and confiscation expectations while maintaining BCA's trauma-informed and safeguarding-centred approach.

9. Students with Additional Needs

Staff must take additional care when supporting students with:

- SEND
- Mental health needs
- Trauma histories
- Child Protection Plans
- Child in Need Plans
- Looked After Child status
- Other safeguarding vulnerabilities

Individual risk assessments and behaviour support plans should detail:

- Known triggers
- Preferred de-escalation strategies
- Communication approaches
- Supportive interventions
- Risks associated with physical intervention

The Academy will work collaboratively with students, families and external professionals when developing support plans.

10. Reporting and Recording

All incidents involving reasonable force must be recorded as soon as possible and before the end of the working day wherever practicable.

Reports must include:

- Student name
- Date, time and location
- Staff involved
- Nature of the incident
- Behaviour leading to intervention
- De-escalation strategies attempted
- Type and duration of force used
- Justification for intervention
- Impact on the student
- Injuries sustained
- Safeguarding considerations
- Post-incident support provided

A Reasonable Force Incident Report Form must be completed for all incidents.

11. Safeguarding and Post-Incident Support

Following any use of reasonable force:

- The student should be offered an opportunity to discuss the incident.
- A welfare check should be completed.
- Any safeguarding concerns must be referred to a Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Support plans and risk assessments should be reviewed.
- Consideration should be given to restorative approaches.

The Academy will always consider whether the incident indicates unmet need, trauma response, exploitation risk or safeguarding concerns.

12. Parent and Carer Communication

Parents or carers must be informed as soon as reasonably practicable following any significant use of reasonable force.

The Academy will:

- Explain the circumstances of the incident.
- Share actions taken.

- Outline any follow-up support.
- Provide opportunities for discussion and review.

For students with EHCPs, communication with parents/carers will take place irrespective of the age of the student.

13. Monitoring and Quality Assurance

All incidents involving reasonable force will be:

- Reviewed by a DSL and/or Senior Leader.
- Monitored for patterns and trends.
- Used to inform staff training and risk management.
- Reported to governors as appropriate.

Learning from incidents will support improvements in behaviour systems, safeguarding processes and student support provision.

14. Staff Training

Relevant staff will receive training in:

- Trauma-informed practice
- De-escalation techniques
- Safeguarding
- Positive behaviour support
- Safe and lawful physical intervention

Training will be refreshed regularly and adapted to the Academy context. MAPA training is recognised as an appropriate intervention training model for designated staff.

15. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Academy will ensure that:

- All interventions are free from discrimination.
- Protected characteristics are considered.
- Reasonable adjustments are made for disabled students.
- The dignity, rights and wellbeing of all students are protected.

The Academy will comply with its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998.

Appendix A

Reasonable Force Incident Report Form

Section 1: Basic Information

- Date of Incident:
- Time of Incident:
- Location:
- Name of Staff Member(s) Involved:
- Role(s):
- Name(s) of Student(s) Involved:
- Vulnerable markers (SEND/LAC/SG/MH):
- DOB / ID Number(s):
- Other Individuals Present (staff or students):

Section 2: Nature of the Incident

- Type of Behaviour Observed (tick or describe):
  - ☐ Physical aggression
  - ☐ Verbal aggression
  - ☐ Risk to self
  - ☐ Risk to others
  - ☐ Damage to property
  - ☐ Refusal to comply
  - ☐ Other (please specify):

- Detailed Description of Incident (chronological account):
  (Provide a clear, factual account of what happened before, during, and after the incident. Avoid opinion and include triggering factors if known.)

Section 3: De-escalation Strategies Used

- Verbal instructions
- Distraction/redirection
- Removal of audience
- Offering time out
- Other (please specify):

Outcome of de-escalation attempts:

Section 4: Use of Reasonable Force

- Was reasonable force used? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes:

- Justification for Use of Force:
  (Why it was necessary – e.g. preventing harm to self/others, damage to property)
- Type of Force Used:
  (Describe clearly – e.g. guiding by arm, separating students, blocking movement)
- Duration of Intervention:
- Who Authorised (if applicable):

Section 5: Outcome and Impact

- Injuries Sustained:
  - Student(s):
  - Staff:
  - Others:
- Medical Attention Required? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Emergency Services Contacted? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Damage to Property:

Section 6: Safeguarding Considerations

- Does this incident raise safeguarding concerns? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- If yes, provide details and actions taken:
- Was this reported to the DSL? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Time and Date reported:

Section 7: Follow-Up Actions

- Parent/Carer informed ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Learning and Behaviour disciplinary applied ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Referral to external agency ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Internal support (e.g. wellbeing, SEND, behaviour plan) ☐ Yes ☐ No

Details of actions taken:

Section 8: Student Voice

- Student account of the incident:
  (Where appropriate, recorded in their own words or summarised)

Section 9: Staff Reflection

(Trauma-informed reflection – what worked, what could be done differently, preventative strategies going forward)

Section 10: Sign-Off

- **Staff Member Completing Report:**
- **Signature:**
- **Date:**
- **Reviewed by DSL / Senior Leader:**
- **Signature:**
- **Date:**