

## **Can I smack my child? What does the law say about physical chastisement?**

*It is illegal for a parent or carer to smack their own child unless it amounts to "reasonable punishment" – which is assessed by taking into account the child's age and the force of the smack.*

However, physical punishment or chastisement of children and young people can have a very detrimental effect on their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

Physical punishment, such as smacking, slapping, pushing or hitting with an implement can cause:

- Direct physical harm or injury such as bruises, cuts, reddening of the skin, scratches, swelling or even broken bones
- Mental harm such as anxiety, isolation, feeling victimised, damage to self-esteem, or a reduction in confidence
- Increased risk of anti-social behaviour from the child
- Increased aggression in children including fighting with siblings, friends and using violence to seek attention
- Increased violent and criminal behaviour in adulthood
- An acceptance that violence is OK, and it is fine to use force to get your own way, if you are annoyed with someone or if they have hurt you
- Breakdown in family relationships, with resentment that could affect the relationship between parents and children into their adulthood

**Any form of physical punishment that leaves a mark on a child or young person is considered an assault and is illegal under the Section 58 of the Children Act 2004.** Where physical chastisement/smacking (with no injuries and no implement used) is known to have occurred this is still an offence of common assault. Many feel there is no justification for inflicting pain on a child or young person as a parent (or any other adult carer).

**If acts of physical punishment are brought to the attention of a safeguarding officer at Rushmere Hall, our training tells us to always refer the incident to social services.** An assessment, that could also involve the police, could then take place. If you want to find out more about the law and guidance we as a school have to follow, you can find out more on our school website's safeguarding page: <https://www.rushmerehallprimaryschool.com/early-help-safeguarding--child-protection.html>

**If you are struggling with your child's behaviour and would like support,** then you can contact Mrs Schultz (Family Liaison Officer) and she will be able to signpost you to parenting support opportunities.

There are also some excellent websites that could help, for example:

- **Family Lives** offers a confidential and free helpline service for families in England and Wales (previously known as Parentline). You can call them on 0808 800 2222 for emotional support, information, advice and guidance on any aspect of parenting and family life. Or visit their website <https://www.familylives.org.uk/>
- The **NSPCC** have a helpline which you can contact for support and advice via email or phone ([help@NSPCC.org.uk](mailto:help@NSPCC.org.uk) / 0808 8005000). Additionally, their website gives some useful information about ways to cope with behaviour at home <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/>. This includes a Positive Parenting Guide which you can download [here](#).
- The **Action for Children** website also has lots of good advice and a helpline too: <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/> In addition they run a variety of parenting programmes.