



Use of Reasonable Force

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Reasonable Force

Definition of Reasonable Force

The Education (NI) Order 1998 (part 11 Article 4 (1)) states:

“A member of the staff of a grant-aided school may use, in relation to any pupil at the school, such force as is reasonable in the circumstances for the purpose of preventing the pupil from doing (or continuing to do) any of the following, namely:

- **committing any offence;**
- **causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself); or**
- **engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils, whether that behaviour occurs during a teaching session or otherwise.”**

Based on this legal framework, the working definition of “reasonable force” is the minimum force necessary to prevent a pupil from physically harming him/herself or others or seriously damaging property, but used in a manner which attempts to preserve the dignity of all concerned.

Practices in line with D.Ed. Regional Policy Framework May 2004.

Preventative Strategies

The school actively promotes positive behaviour management strategies thus reducing the need for the use of any form of physical intervention, except in emergency situations.

Procedures

The following procedures have been agreed by the staff and adopted by the Board of Governors. Parents and pupils will be informed of the school’s procedures and support structures within the overall **Pastoral Care Policy**.

Roles and Responsibilities

Reasonable force/safe handling can be used by any member of staff who is authorised by the principal to have lawful control or charge of pupils, e.g. teachers, classroom assistants, supervisory assistants. The principal will confirm with all staff those who are authorised to be in charge of pupils at any given time.

There may be circumstances when a member of staff may have to decide between making an intervention/using reasonable force by placing him/herself in a dangerous situation or standing back and thereby allowing colleagues or pupils to face a potential danger. There will always be an element of personal judgment in these

decisions and there is the possibility of someone being injured. However, it is reasonable to expect a member of staff to engage in some risk where there is evidence of danger to others and intervention has a good chance of being effective.

Staff should not, however, put themselves in personal danger merely to safeguard property.

Reasonable force/safe handling can be used by a teacher or other authorised person(s) on the school premises or when authorised elsewhere e.g. supervision of pupils in bus queues, a field trip, on other authorised out of school activities such as a sporting event or educational trip. Reasonable force should be limited to emergency situations and used only as a last resort when all other behaviour management strategies have been exhausted and where:

- action is necessary in self defence or because there is imminent risk of injury to another pupil or person;
- there is a developing risk of injury to another pupil or person, or significant damage to property;
- a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline.

Examples that fall into the above categories are:

- a pupil attacks a member of staff, or another pupil;
- pupils are fighting;
- a pupil 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 pupil is running in a corridor or on a stairway in which he/she might cause an accident likely to injure her/himself or others;
- a pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave school (Note: this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school);
- a pupil persistently refuses to obey an order to leave a classroom;
- a pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson.

Forms of Reasonable Force

When other behaviour management strategies have failed – it should be the minimum intervention or force that should reasonably be employed depending on the **age, sex, physical strength, size, understanding, medical condition and any**

special needs of the pupil and used in a way that **preserves the dignity and respect of all concerned**. The use of reasonable force/safe handling should involve a calm and measured approach at all times appropriate to the particular pupil and be in accordance with the schools agreed strategies and the following procedures:

- tell the pupil to stop inappropriate behaviour;
- ask the pupil to behave appropriately, clearly stating the desired behaviour;
- tell the pupil that physical intervention will take place if inappropriate behaviour continues;
- during the incident repeatedly reassure the pupil and tell him/her that physical contact will stop as soon as he/she is ready to behave appropriately;
- if the teacher, classroom assistant or supervisory assistant feels at risk, e.g. from a large or older group of pupils, send for the nearest staff support.

The forms of safe handling the school will use depend on the individual circumstances and are:

- separating pupils who are fighting, or who are about to fight;
- blocking a pupil's path;
- holding;
- breakaway techniques (e.g. when a member of staff is grabbed by a pupil);
- leading a pupil by the arm;
- shepherding a pupil away by placing hands on the backs of elbows; or
- using more restrictive holds (in extreme circumstances).

Record Keeping

All incidents involving the use of reasonable force will be recorded in the schools agreed pro-forma "**Record/Report Of The Use Of Reasonable Force**". The school will keep an accurate up-to-date record of all such incidents. Immediately following any incident, the member of staff concerned will inform the Principal or D.T. and provide the contemporaneous written record/report (Incident Record Form/Safe Handling form).

The Chairperson of the Board of Governors and the Principal will review **annually** the entries in the incident book. Records of incidents will be kept until the date of the child's twenty-first birthday.

The pupil's views should also be recorded as soon as possible, preferably on the same day. Specimen - Incident Record Form.

Contacting Parents

Parents/carers will be contacted as soon as possible and the incident explained to them. This will also be recorded in the “**Record/Report Of The Use Of Reasonable Force**” as defined in the school policy. Any complaint from a parent will be dealt with within the school's complaints policy/procedures as detailed below.

Complaints

If an incident occurs in Kircubbin Integrated Primary School involving the use of reasonable force/restraint by a teacher, the procedures governing such incidents should be followed. This will include informing the parents(s)/guardian(s) of the child as outlined above.

In the event of a subsequent complaint made against a member of staff either by or on behalf of the child, this will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Complaints Policy/Procedure and in accordance with the Circular 1999/10, Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection.

Training and Development

All staff will have regular awareness raising of issues relating to the use of reasonable force/safe handling, procedures and practices relating to behaviour management and child protection policy procedures. All staff will receive appropriate training and development, in line with the school's staff development policy, in the use of preventative strategies and approaches for managing difficult situations when they may arise. Training will be provided by accredited trainers.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is one of our preventative strategies to minimise the risk of an incident escalating unnecessarily and will be a normal practice for our school where a pupil or a small number of pupils are known to exhibit disturbing or distressing behaviour (EBD). **Risk assessment will be considered only for those pupils where there is a foreseeable risk and enables the school to plan and train accordingly.** Risk assessment will be considered from two perspectives (a) environmental risk assessment or (b) individual risk assessment. This should form part of the pupil's education plan. (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2).

Environmental Risk Assessment

- Identify situations or locations where there is increased risks of incidents happening.
- Analysis of past incidents to identify medium to high risk locations.

- Staff and pupils consulted.
- Individual pupil consulted.
- Decide the appropriate type and level of supervision.
- Principal and SMT to make recommendations to Board of Governors on type and level of supervision to minimise risk.
- Implement plan.
- Review plan.

Individual Risk Assessment

Where a school is aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force/safe handling, the school should plan its response by:

- consulting the pupil, as appropriate;
- consulting the parents – specific action the school may need to take;
- briefing staff – what action they should be taking (may require training or guidance);
- managing the pupil – e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict;
- ensuring that additional support can be summoned wherever possible;
- implementing plan and review;
- reviewing plan.

Risk Reduction

Risk reduction should include:

- proactive measure to support the child effectively and prevent difficulties emerging;
- early interventions to help the child in difficult situations and avert problems; and
- planned measures to manage the child and others safely, when unavoidable difficulties arise.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored regularly by the Senior Leadership Team and the issues arising reported by the Principal to the Governors. The policy will be reviewed by the Principal and the Board of Governors.

Signed: _____ Principal

Signed: _____ Chair of Board of Governors

Date: _____