

Donegall Road Primary School



Safe Handling Policy

Date Ratified By Board of Governors: *March 2026*

Date of Review: *March 2029*

Staff Member Responsible: *Mrs. Emma Clements (SENCo)*

Contents

- 1** Rationale
- 2** Principles
- 3** Definitions
- 4** When Safe Handling May Be Used
- 5** Types of Acceptable Intervention
- 6** Prevention and De-escalation
- 7** Recording and Reporting
- 8** Complaints
- 9** Review

1. Rationale

Donegall Road Primary School is committed to providing a safe, secure, and supportive environment where pupils can learn and thrive. Staff aim to use positive relationships, proactive strategies, and de-escalation techniques to reduce the likelihood of challenging behaviour. In rare circumstances, staff may need to use **safe handling**, including reasonable force, to prevent harm, maintain safety, or protect property.

This policy outlines how staff safely support pupils when physical intervention becomes necessary. The aim is always to maintain a safe, calm learning environment and to protect the dignity and wellbeing of every child.

2. Principles

- Physical intervention is a **last resort** and used only when absolutely necessary.
- All actions must prioritise the **safety, rights, and welfare** of the child.
- Staff use the **least restrictive** intervention for the **shortest possible time**.
- Interventions must never be used as punishment.
- Staff follow relevant legislation and safeguarding guidance.

This policy is informed by:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Use of Reasonable Force (DfE guidance)
- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Equality Act 2010

Staff must act within the law, using the **minimum force necessary** and only when absolutely required.

3. Definitions

Safe Handling

A planned or emergency physical intervention used to prevent pupils from harming themselves, others, or causing serious disruption.

Reasonable Force

Force that is proportionate to the circumstances and necessary to achieve a legitimate outcome.

4. When Safe Handling May Be Used

Physical intervention may be considered when a pupil is:

- At risk of **harming themselves**
- At risk of **harming others**
- Causing **serious damage** to property
- Behaving in a way that **significantly disrupts safety** or prevents essential teaching and learning

Staff may use reasonable force to:

- Prevent injury to a pupil or another person
- Stop a pupil from damaging property
- Prevent a pupil from leaving a supervised area if they are at risk
- Manage serious disruption where safety is compromised
- Break up a fight
- Prevent a pupil from harming themselves

In Donegall Road Primary School, the use of reasonable force with children will always be as a last resort or in an emergency where it is possible that significant harm will occur if action is not taken immediately. It will only be used when all other behaviour management strategies have been exhausted. Staff must first use de-escalation strategies such as calm verbal prompts, distraction, offering choices, or removing triggers.

Force will never be used as a punishment.

5. Types of Acceptable Intervention

Staff may use:

- **Guiding or escorting** a pupil by the arm or shoulder
- **Blocking** to prevent unsafe movement
- **Holding** techniques that do not restrict breathing, circulation, or cause pain
- **Physical prompts** to encourage safe movement

Staff must **never** use:

- Holds that restrict breathing
- Pressure on joints, neck, or torso
- Any action intended to cause pain or humiliation
- Forced isolation in a locked room

6. Prevention and De-escalation

Staff use:

- Early intervention
- Verbal de-escalation
- Calm body language
- Distraction and redirection
- Offering choices
- Time and space
- Individual risk assessments and Risk Reduction Action Plans.

7. Recording and Reporting

Any occasion where force is used will be recorded in full:

- the name/s of the pupil/s involved
- the time and place of the incident;
- the names of any witnesses;
- the reasons for the use of force;
- an account of what happened including pupil response and the outcome of the incident;
- the details of any damage or injury.

These will be entered on the Safe Handling Record form (see Appendix 1). This will be shared with parents/carers and any other relevant personnel.

8. Post-Incident Support

After an incident:

- Staff and pupils receive a debrief
- The pupil is supported to reflect and repair relationships
- Risk assessments and Risk Reduction Action Plans are updated if needed

9. Complaints

Complaints about the use of safe handling follow the school's Complaints Procedure. All complaints are taken seriously and investigated promptly.

10. Review

This policy is reviewed on a three-yearly cycle or sooner if legislation or best practice changes.

Person who employed safe handling techniques: _____

Child: _____

Date: _____

Safe Handling Record

<p>Who was involved? Were there any witnesses?</p>	
<p>Account of what happened. Where and when did it happen? (location, date and time) Provide a detailed account - continue on back if necessary.</p>	
<p>What triggered the behaviour?</p>	
<p>What strategies were used to deescalate the situation?</p>	
<p>What positive/safe handling techniques used and for how long? Why did you use them?</p>	
<p>Were there any injuries to the child?</p>	
<p>Did you act in the best interests of the child?</p>	

Print name: _____ Signed: _____