

# **St. John the Baptist Primary School**

## **Bunscoil Eoin Baiste**



## **Safe Handling Policy**

## **Principles**

St. John the Baptist Primary School believes that:

- ④ Each child has the right to be educated in a safe and secure environment where each child's moral, intellectual, personal, spiritual, social and emotional development is promoted.
- ④ Parents and carers are informed and reassured that their children are being educated in a safe, caring and respectful atmosphere.
- ④ All staff have the right to work in a safe and secure environment.

These principles underpin our school ethos and culture.

## **Mission Statement**

St John the Baptist P.S., Bunscoil Eoin Baiste is at the heart of our community. We are a happy, welcoming, caring, respectful and inclusive learning community. We are proud to be driven by Catholic Ethos and we are accepting of diversity, in which every member of our school family can grow, learn and excel in a safe environment, becoming valued members of society. We strive to encourage, educate and nurture our children while focusing on them, their health and well-being and the curriculum.

Ag foghlaim don todhchaí. Learning for the future.

## **The Legal Framework**

Safe handling should be limited to emergency situations and used only in the last resort. Under the Children Order 1995, it is only permissible as described under the heading "Physical Control". Article 4 of the Education Order 1998 clarifies powers that already exist in common law. It enables trained staff in the school, authorised by the Principal, to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances, to prevent a pupil from:

- ④ Committing an offence
- ④ Causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil themselves)
- ④ Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among its pupils, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

(Examples of possible situations are given in Appendix 1)

## **Definition of Safe Handling at St. John the Baptist Primary School**

Safe handling is the safe and positive application of the minimum force necessary with the intention of protecting the child 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.

## General Policy Aims

Staff at St. John the Baptist actively promote positive behaviour management and recognise that the use of reasonable force is only one of the last in a range of strategies available to secure pupil safety/well-being and also to maintain good order and discipline. Our policy on safe handling should therefore be read in conjunction with our Pastoral Care policies.

## Specific Aims of the Safe/Positive Handling Policy

- ④ To protect every person in the school community from harm
- ④ To protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful
- ④ To develop and implement guidance for staff (teaching and non-teaching) so that they are clear about the circumstances in which they might use reasonable force to restrain pupils and how such force might be applied.

## Why Use Safe Handling

Safe handling should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a child's action or perhaps by removing a physical object which could be used to harm him/herself or others. It is only likely to be needed if a child appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and behaviour. It is not possible to define every circumstance in which positive handling would be necessary or appropriate and staff will have to exercise their own judgement in situations which arise within the above categories. Staff should always act within the school's policy on Positive Behaviour, particularly in dealing with disruptive behaviour. Staff should be aware that when they are in charge of children during the school day, or during other supervised activities, they are acting in *loco parentis* and should, therefore, take reasonable action to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. Failure to positively handle a pupil who is subsequently injured or injures another, could, in certain circumstances, lead to an accusation of negligence. At the same time staff are not expected to place themselves in situations where they are likely to suffer injury as a result of their intervention.

## Alternative Strategies

There are some situations in which the need for safe handling is immediate and were there are no equally effective alternatives (e.g. if a pupil is about to run across a road). However, in many circumstances there are alternatives e.g. use of assertiveness skills such as:

- ④ the *broken record* in which an instruction is repeated until the pupil complies
- ④ use of a distracter, such as a loud whistle, to interrupt the behaviour (such as a fight) long enough for other methods of verbal control to be effective
- ④ withdrawal of attention (audience) e.g. if an action such as damage to property is threatened
- ④ other techniques designed to defuse the situation, such as the avoidance of confrontation, or use of humour (in these cases the incident can be dealt with later when emotions are no longer running high)
- ④ the employment of other sanctions consistent with the school's policy on Positive Behaviour.

## Health and Safety

When using reasonable force/physical intervention/restraint/safe handling, the pupil's health and safety must always be considered and monitored.

Physical interventions should involve the minimum amount of force necessary to resolve the situation and calm the pupil.

## Use of Safe Handling

**Safe handling should be applied as an act of care and control and always involve a calm and measured approach with the intention of re-establishing verbal control as soon as possible and, at the same time, allowing the pupil to regain self-control. It should never take a form which could be seen as a punishment.**

Named staff are only authorised to use reasonable force in applying safe handling, although there is no absolute definition of this, as what constitutes reasonable force depends upon the particular situation and the pupil to whom it is being applied. However, as a general rule, only the force necessary to stop or prevent the behaviour should be used, in accordance with the guidelines below.

There are some forms of physical intervention which may involve minimal physical contact, such as blocking a pupil's path or the staff member physically interposing him or herself between the pupil and another pupil or object. However, in some circumstances, direct physical contact may be necessary.

In all circumstances other methods should be used if appropriate or effective safe handling should be a last resort.

## When safe handling becomes necessary:

### DO

- Ⓜ Tell the pupil what you are doing and why
- Ⓜ Use the minimum force necessary
- Ⓜ Involve another member of staff if possible
- Ⓜ Tell the pupil what he/she must do for you to remove the restraint (this may need frequent repetition)
- Ⓜ Use simple and clear language
- Ⓜ Hold limbs above a major joint if possible, e.g. above the elbow
- Ⓜ Relax your restraint in response to the pupil's compliance

### DON'T

- Ⓜ Act in temper (involve another staff member if you fear loss of control)
- Ⓜ Involve yourself in a prolonged verbal exchange with the pupil
- Ⓜ Attempt to reason with the pupil
- Ⓜ Involve other pupils in the restraint
- Ⓜ Touch or hold the pupil in sexual areas

- ④ Twist or force limbs back against a joint
- ④ Bend fingers or pull hair
- ④ Hold the pupil in a way which will restrict blood flow or breathing e.g. around the neck
- ④ Slap, punch, kick or trip up the pupil

### **Actions After an Incident**

Safe handling often occurs in response to highly charged emotional situations and there is a clear need for debriefing after the incident, both for the staff involved and the pupil. **The Principal or a senior member of staff should be informed of any incident as soon as possible** and will take responsibility for making arrangements for debriefing once the situation has stabilised. An appropriate member of the teaching staff should always be involved in debriefing the pupil involved and any victims of the incident should be offered support and their parents informed.

If the behaviour is part of an ongoing pattern, it may be necessary to address the situation through the development of a behavioural IEP, which may include an anger management programme or other strategies agreed by the SENCO.

It is also helpful to consider the circumstances precipitating the incident to explore ways in which future incidents can be avoided.

All incidents should be recorded immediately. All sections of this report should be completed so that in the event of any future complaint a full record is available. If the incident occurred in line of sight of CCTV, the footage will be saved to safeguard all persons involved. The Principal or a senior member of staff will contact parents as soon as possible after an incident, normally on the same day, to inform them of the actions that were taken and why, and to provide them with an opportunity to discuss it.

### **Risk Assessments**

If we become aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, we will plan how to respond if the situation arises. Such planning will address:

- ④ Management of the pupil (e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict, holds to be used if necessary)
- ④ Involvement of parents to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might need to take
- ④ Briefing of staff to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking (this may identify a need for training or guidance)
- ④ Where intervention is deemed necessary, and where practical, two adults will verbally agree on an appropriate course of action that prioritises the child's safety and wellbeing, with this agreement documented in writing.
- ④ Identification of additional support that can be summoned if appropriate.

## **Complaints**

Any complaints regarding the safe handling of pupils should be made by following the School's Complaints Procedure.

**When might it be appropriate to use reasonable force**

Examples of situations that may require restraint are when:

- ① A pupil attacks a member of staff or another pupil
- ① Pupils fighting
- ① 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
- ① A pupil is running in the corridor in a way in which he/she might have or cause an accident likely to injure him/herself or others
- ① A pupil absconding from a class or trying to leave school (N.B this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school)
- ① A pupil persistently refuses to obey an order to leave an area
- ① A pupil behaves in such a way that seriously disrupts a lesson.
- ① When a pupil refuses to enter the school or classroom following parental hand-over at the gate.

**We will review this policy on a yearly basis.**

Appendix 2



St. John the Baptist Primary School  
Record of Restraint Report Form

Name of Pupil: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Year Group: \_\_\_\_\_

**Events leading up to the Incident**

Where did the incident start? \_\_\_\_\_

What was happening at the time? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Describe the Event that Occurred**

Date of incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Reported by: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Member(s) of staff involved: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Adult witnesses to restraint: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Pupil witnesses to restraint:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What action did you take to try to de-escalate the situation before using restraint?**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What behaviour was the child presenting that warranted restraint/physical intervention?**

**(Please tick appropriate box)**

At risk of injury to self or others       At risk of damage to property   
Compromising good order/discipline       At risk of committing a criminal offence

**What do you believe would have happened if there had been no physical intervention?**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**How was the pupil held?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**How long did the pupil need to be held?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Was anybody injured? YES / NO    If yes, please give details:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of member of staff who verbally checked pupil for injury after the hold:

Has the child been physically restrained before? YES / NO

**Implications for Future Planning**

Does this pupil have an individual behaviour programme / education plan? YES / NO

Do changes need to be made to any of the following? (Please tick appropriate box)

The environment e.g. organisation, curriculum  Targets for teaching new skills

Reinforcing strategies  Defusing and calming strategies

Other  Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do other agencies need to be involved in the future? YES / NO

If yes, please specify who and with what aim: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Follow Up Action**

Medical intervention/First aider was needed YES / NO

Was a referral made to a doctor or the hospital? YES / NO

Please specify other recording procedures:

Accident Book Record  Accident Form  Child Protection

Parent /Carer informed by Telephone  Letter  Direct Contact

**Form completed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Post held:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Principal's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_