

Ballytober Primary School

Use of Reasonable Force and Safe Handling Policy



Ratified: 3rd March 2022

Signed: _____

Chairperson, BoG

Ballytober Primary School

Policy on the Use of Reasonable Force and Safe Handling

We have a dual responsibility:

1. to provide a safe and secure environment for the entire school community ie. Pupils and staff
2. to ensure the safety of all by promoting and sustaining appropriate behaviour.

This policy and our procedures have been developed in line with guidance from:

- The Department of Education NI circular 1999
- DE document Towards a Model Policy in Schools on the Use of Reasonable Force August 2002 and
- Regional Policy Framework on the Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling May 2004

Principles

Ballytober Primary School believes that:

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

These principles underpin our school ethos and culture.

Purpose

The following purposes underpin Ballytober Primary School's policy and practices to:

- Create a learning environment in which young people and adults feel safe.
- Protect every person in the school community from harm
- Protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful; and
- 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.

Mission Statement

It is our intention to provide our pupils with a safe and secure learning environment in which they will be motivated and challenged. We believe the education in our school should be presented and experienced in such a way that when our pupils leave us they will still be enthusiastic learners with positive attitudes towards learning.

Links with Other Policies

This policy is one of the overall pastoral policies and dovetails into the school's existing Behaviour, Anti-Bullying, Child Protection, Special Needs and Health and Safety Policies.

Definition of Reasonable Force

The Education (NI) Order 1998 (part II 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 so) any of the following, namely:

- 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.
- Causing personal injury to or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil him/herself) or
- A pupil behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson."

Staff Assistance

Reasonable force should ideally be used when more than one member of staff is present. If a member of staff is alone in a situation then, if possible, they should send a reliable pupil to the nearest available staff member. The only occasion when a member of staff should apply reasonable force without hesitation is to safeguard the well-being of a pupil or pupils, or another adult.

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 following procedures:

- Tell the pupil to stop the 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
- If inappropriate behaviour continues physical intervention will be implemented as required. The forms of reasonable force which the school will use will depend on the individual circumstances and will include restraining the pupil in an acceptable manner which will be suited to the particular incident in order to prevent injury to him/herself or any other person eg. Separating pupils who are fighting.
- 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, eg. from a large or older group of pupils, send for the nearest staff support.

The forms of reasonable force the school will use will depend on the individual circumstances and are:

- Protecting a child from danger (eg. running on to a busy road/in danger of being hurt) the child will be seized by the nearest hand, arm or piece of clothing and pulled back to safety
- Separating pupils who are fighting, or who are about to fight
- Blocking a pupil's path
- Holding
- Breakaway techniques (eg. when a member of staff is grabbed by a pupil)
- Leading a pupil by the arm
- Shepherding a pupil away by placing hands on backs of elbows or
- Using more restrictive holds (in extreme circumstances)

Staff are, of course, more closely involved with our pupils during their KS1 years and also with pupils who have difficulties in later years (SEN). Safe handling will be needed when eg.

- Guiding children in how to line up
- Leading them by the hand
- Shepherding them into lining up safely
- Caring for a child who has fallen/sustained an injury - helping him/her to get up, wiping up tears and attending to injuries
- Preventing a pupil from injuring him/herself eg. pulling a pupil back from danger

On these and similar occasions staff will act to protect and ensure the safety of our pupils.

Health and Safety

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

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.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is one of our preventative strategies, used 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 from two perspectives:

1. Individual pupil's risk assessment - this should form part of any identified pupil's education plan (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2)

Risk assessment will be considered only for those pupils where there is a foreseeable risk and enables the school to plan and train accordingly.

2. Environmental risk assessment ie. inside and around the school building (as detailed within Health and Safety Policy)

Support Structures

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

The Principal shall be deemed the Designated Teacher for the Use of Reasonable Force and Safe Handling. 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, eg. 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.

Procedures

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 judgement 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, eg supervision of pupils in bus queues, a field trip or 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:**

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

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 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

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

Limits on the Use of Force

The law strictly prohibits the use of force, which constitutes the giving of corporal punishment. The use of force as a punishment or to intentionally cause pain, injury or humiliation would contravene our Child Protection Policy. Staff should **never** act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, eg. by:

- Holding around the neck
- Any hold that might restrict breathing
- Kicking, slapping, punching or using any implement
- Forcing limbs against joints
- Tripping
- Holding or pulling by the hair
- Holding the pupil face down on the ground
- Staff should also avoid touching or holding a pupil in any way that might be considered indecent

The use of reasonable force is only to be employed in exceptional circumstances or in an emergency where a pupil appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and whose behaviour is presenting a threat to him or herself or

others. A member of staff should not intervene in an incident without help if there is a risk that he/she may be injured or may endanger his/her life.

Record Keeping

All incidents involving the use of reasonable force must be recorded in the school's Incident /Accident Report Book. The Principal will keep an accurate up-to-date record of all such incidents. Immediately following any incident the member of staff concerned must inform the Principal or a senior member of staff and provide the contemporaneous written record/report. (Appendix 3 Incident Record 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. Confidentiality and the young person's right to privacy will need to be ensured. The pupil's views should also be recorded as soon as possible, preferably on the same day. Refer to Appendix 3 specimen Incident Record Form

Post-Incident Management

Guidance

The use of physical intervention can be upsetting to all concerned, therefore it is important to ensure that staff and pupils are given emotional support and where required, basic first-aid treatment.

Immediate action should be taken to ensure that medical help is accessed for any injuries that require more than basic first-aid. All injuries should be reported and recorded in accordance with the school's procedures - parents/carers must be informed and allowed an opportunity to discuss.

Where it is clear that the teacher/member of staff concerned needs further support, advice or training, the Principal should take prompt action to ensure it is provided.

- **Mrs L. Chartres or Mrs H. McConaghy** (school first aiders) will check for injuries and arrange medical aid or contact parent
- **Mrs L. Chartres or Mrs H. McConaghy** will provide staff and children with support after incidents

Contacting Parents

Parents/carers should be contacted as soon as possible and the incident explained to them. This will also be recorded in the Incident /Accident Report Book. 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 Ballytober 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 parent(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/Procedures and in accordance with Circular 1999/10 Pastoral Care in Schools - Child Protection.

Staff, who themselves are subject to physical violence or assault should be supported, as appropriate, in taking any necessary action against an assailant.

Training and Development

All staff will have awareness-raising sessions of issues relating to the use of reasonable force/safe handling, procedures and practices relating to behaviour management and child protection policy and procedures. All staff will also receive appropriate training and development, in line with school needs, in the use of preventative strategies and approaches for managing difficult situations when they may arise and with special reference to the outcomes of risk assessments.

Policy Development and Guidance

Consultation

Key stakeholders must be consulted on the policy - (Education & Libraries Order (NI) 2003)

These must include:

- Children and young people
- Parents and carers
- All staff
- Board of Governors

Risk Assessment

A small number of pupils may exhibit disturbed or distressing behaviour which may require some form of physical intervention by staff. To minimise the risk of incidents escalating unnecessarily due to lack of foresight, planning and training, schools should carry out a risk assessment from two perspectives:

- Environmental risk assessment
- Individual risk assessment

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 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 - eg. 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:

- Pro-active measures to support the child effectively and prevent difficulties from emerging
- Early intervention to help the child in difficult situations and avert problems
- Planned measures to manage the child and others safely when unavoidable difficulties arise

Ballytober Primary School

Risk Assessment Proforma

Name of pupil : _____

Date of Birth : _____ Age : _____

SEN Register Code of Practice Stage : _____

Support to Date : _____

Education Plan : _____

Risk Assessment Completed by member of staff : _____

Date : _____

Signed : _____

(Principal)

(Date)

Consultation has been carried out ...

Please ✓ as appropriate

with the pupil	
With the other pupils	
With the parent/carer	
With staff	