



St. Nicholas' Primary School  
Minorca Place  
Carrickfergus  
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## St. Nicholas' Primary School, Carrickfergus

### Safe Handling & the Use of Reasonable Force with Children



#### Guidelines for Staff Use



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# Safe Handling and the Use of Reasonable Force

## Rationale:

*St Nicholas' Primary School is committed to the development of each pupil's full potential in a climate of joy, challenge, co-operation and celebration.*

The paramount responsibility of every person connected with the school is the safety and welfare of its children. Through a sense of order and a sense of purpose the care and education of children are made more effective.

The Department of Education Circular 1999/9 quotes Article 4 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998. "On any occasion where a member of staff has responsibility for a pupil (in school or outside the premises) this order permits the member of staff to use "such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a pupil from:

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

In St. Nicholas' 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.

## Force will never be used as a punishment.

Situations where reasonable force might be necessary include:

- A pupil attacking another pupil or a member of staff;
- Pupils fighting;
- A pupil causing, or likely to cause damage or injury by rough play, accident, wilful action or misuse of dangerous materials and items;
- A pupil running in a corridor where there is a risk of accident;
- A pupil trying to leave school;
- A pupil defying repeated instructions to leave a classroom;
- A pupil seriously disrupting a lesson



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It is within this context that safe handling and the use of reasonable force may, on occasions, be necessary.

## **Aims in Relation to Safe Handling and the Use of Reasonable Force**

The aims of this policy are:

1. To protect every person in the school community from harm;
2. To create a learning environment in which children and adults feel safe;
3. To protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention that is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful; and
4. To provide both teaching and non-teaching staff with guidance relating to circumstances in which reasonable force might be used and how such reasonable force might be applied.

## **Definition of Safe Handling and Reasonable Force**

The use of reasonable force is only lawful if the circumstances warrant it. The degree of force used will be the minimum appropriate to the seriousness of the behaviour or incident that it is intended to prevent. It will be employed calmly and in a professional manner. This might include:

- Physically separating pupils;
- Blocking a pupil's path;
- Holding;
- Leading a pupil by the hand or arm;
- Shepherding a pupil with a hand on the back or shoulder; or
- using more restrictive holds (in extreme circumstances)

## **Unacceptable and Unreasonable Force**

The following uses of force will always be considered unreasonable and therefore will not be used in St. Nicholas' Primary School:

- holding around the neck;
- Any hold that might restrict breathing;
- kicking, slapping, poking or punching;
- forcing limbs against joints;
- tripping;
- holding by the hair; and
- holding the pupil face down on the ground.



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## Anticipating the Use of Reasonable Force

Having completed both an individual risk assessment and an environmental risk assessment the situation will continue to be monitored. All staff will be encouraged to report concerns relating to routines, individuals and situations that have the potential to lead to incidents requiring the use of reasonable force.

Teachers and supervisory assistants will only exercise the use of reasonable force in extreme circumstances. In an emergency any member of staff will have the authority to use reasonable force.

If it is considered likely that a pupil will be sufficiently disruptive to require the regular use of reasonable force (whether for medical, special needs or another reason), the parents/carers will be consulted and an appropriate action plan agreed and reviewed regularly. With the agreement of a parent, completion of form RF1 would only be required following incidents not accounted for within the action plan.

## Responsibility for Reasonable Force

The right of a member of staff to use reasonable force to prevent a pupil from:

- committing an offence;
- causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil him/herself); or
- engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any of its pupils whether during a teaching session or otherwise applies to teachers at the school and to any other members of staff, who with the authority of the principal, have lawful control or charge of pupils – this might include classroom assistants, Lunchtime supervisors, caretakers or voluntary helpers accompanying pupils on school visits.

This paragraph has been included within our policy in response to advice from the Department of Education (September 1998).

## Recording the Use of Reasonable Force

Any occasion where force is used will be recorded in full: the name/s of the pupil/s involved and 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 form RF1 (see Appendix 1) which will then be copied to relevant parties.

## Complaints



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Any complaint following the use of reasonable force will be considered according to the procedures outlined in the school's policy for dealing with complaints made against a teacher.

## Review

This policy has been written and agreed in response to the Department of Education Circular 1999/9 and updated in light of guidance material issued by DENI and NEELB in 2003. It will be reviewed annually in relation to ongoing individual and environmental risk analyses, advice and training. It will be placed on the school website within the Policies folder.

## RF1 FORM

### Incident Requiring the Use of Reasonable Force *RF1*

**Pupil:**                      **Class:**

**Member/s of staff who employed reasonable force:**

**Date:**            **Time:**

**Names of adult witnesses:**

**Status:**

**Reasons for the use of reasonable force**

(E.g. To ensure safety, to preserve order, to prevent destruction)

**Account of incident** (include description of incident, reasonable force, pupil response, outcome) (continue overleaf if necessary)

**Details of injury and/or damage:**

**Details of any measures introduced following the incident:**

**Signatures of staff involved:**

**Principal's signature:**

Copies to: parent/carer child's file R F file Chairman of BoG staff involved

Geraldine Doherty  
June 2023



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