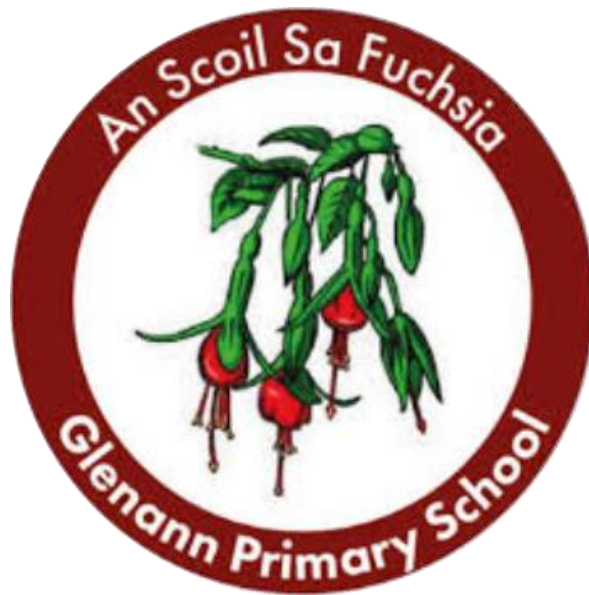


Glenann Primary School



Reasonable Force and Safe Handling Policy

September 2025

The purpose of our school is to create a safe and secure environment where all children are enabled to achieve their full potential and to be educated with respect and dignity. The school's policy on the use of reasonable force has been developed to enable staff to achieve this purpose.

Despite the best efforts to manage pupils with care and sensitivity, a small number may, at times, display aggressive behaviour that poses a risk to the safety of others, including fellow pupils and staff. It is the duty of all schools to uphold their pastoral responsibility by taking all reasonable and proportionate measures to protect the welfare of pupils and maintain a safe and secure learning environment.

Aims

Reasonable force is one of several approaches available to schools and staff to help ensure the safety and well-being of pupils, and to uphold a positive and orderly learning environment. Any individual who may be required to use reasonable force must be fully informed of the appropriate strategies available and must have a clear understanding of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable practice in line with school guidelines and statutory expectations.

This policy aims to:

- foster a secure and supportive learning environment where both pupils and staff feel safe and respected;
- safeguard all members of the school community from harm;
- ensure that pupils are protected from any physical intervention that is unwarranted, inappropriate, excessive or harmful; and
- provide clear guidance to staff regarding the appropriate use of reasonable force, including when it may be necessary and how it should be safely and proportionately applied.

Procedures

In certain circumstances, a member of staff may be required to make a judgement between intervening with reasonable force or refraining from action, which could result in colleagues or pupils being exposed to potential harm. Such decisions must be guided by professional judgement, the principles of safeguarding and the duty of care owed to all members of the school community. There will always be an element of personal judgement in these decisions. However, it is reasonable to expect a member of staff to engage in some risk where there is evidence of danger to others.

Reasonable force can be used by a teacher or other authorised person in an emergency situation. Reasonable force will only be used 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; and/or

- there is a developing risk of injury to another pupil or person, or significant damage to property.

Staff should not put themselves in personal danger to protect property.

Definition of Reasonable Force

Reasonable force is defined as the minimum force necessary to prevent a pupil from physically harming himself, herself or others or seriously damaging property, but used in a manner which attempts to preserve the dignity of all concerned. The use of force can be regarded as 'reasonable' only if:

- the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it;
- the degree of force used is in proportion to the incident and is the minimum needed; and
- the age and level of understanding of the pupil is taken into account.

Otherwise, any use of force is unlawful. Thus, reasonable force should not be used automatically in situations or as a form of discipline, but only where other behaviour management strategies have failed. Physical intervention to force compliance with staff instructions should never be used as a substitute for good behaviour management.

Reasonable Force and the Role of Staff

Reasonable force might involve staff:

- physically interposing between pupils;
- blocking a pupil's path;
- leading a pupil by the arm;
- shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of his/her back; or
- in extreme circumstances, holding, pushing or pulling a pupil (e.g. to separate pupils in a fight).

The right to use such reasonable force applies only on school premises or on other out of school authorised activities, sporting events or educational trips/visits.

Preventative Strategies

Glenann Primary School is committed to fostering a culture of positive behaviour through proactive and supportive management strategies. These approaches are designed to minimise the need for physical intervention, which will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where immediate action is required to prevent harm or ensure safety.

All staff will seek to follow strategies likely to reduce the need for force in dealing with difficult pupils, based on the age of the pupil and context in which they are applied. They will endeavour at all times to:

- move calmly and confidently;
- make clear, simple statements, telling pupil to stop and consequences of failing to do so.
- intervene early;
- communicate with pupil throughout the incident;

- try to maintain eye contact;
- if necessary, summon another adult before a problem escalates; and
- if necessary, remove audience from immediate location.

Staff should never give the impression that they have lost their temper or are acting from anger or frustration. When the school is aware that an individual student is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, the school will draw upon an Individual Risk Assessment in line with the Regional Policy Framework Document (2004), consult parents and plan proactive and reactive measures appropriately.

When Reasonable Force may be used

Staff are expected to prioritise calm and considered responses before resorting to any form of physical intervention. In situations where a member of staff may be at risk of injury, it is generally inappropriate to intervene without support. In such cases, staff should remove other pupils who may be in danger and immediately seek assistance from a colleague.

The use of reasonable force may be justified in circumstances where it is necessary to protect oneself or others (self-defence), to prevent imminent harm or significant damage to property, or to address behaviour that seriously disrupts the maintenance of good order and discipline.

Examples are listed below.

- A pupil attacks a member of staff or a pupil.
- Pupils are fighting.
- A pupil is in danger of causing injury or damage by accident, rough play, and misuse of dangerous materials/substances.

In exceptional circumstances, where there is an immediate risk of injury, a member of staff may need to take any necessary action consistent with the use of reasonable force, for example, to prevent a pupil running into the path of traffic or throwing something, which might hit someone.

Staff should never act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:

- holding a pupil around the neck or the collar likely to restrict breathing;
- hitting a pupil;
- throwing an object at a pupil;
- twisting or forcing limbs against a joint;
- holding or pulling a pupil by the hair or ear; or
- holding a pupil face down on the ground.

Staff should not intervene without help when dealing with an older pupil, a physically large pupil, more than one pupil or where there is serious risk of injury. Instead, they should remove other pupils who might be at risk, summon assistance from colleagues, inform pupils that this is being done and continue to defuse the situation orally. In keeping with the ethos of the school, reasonable force will only be applied as a last resort and in a way that preserves the dignity and respect of all concerned.

Reporting the use of Reasonable Force

Whenever reasonable force is used, the member of staff involved must complete a detailed written record of the incident at the earliest opportunity. This account should be contemporaneous and factual. The staff member must also inform the principal as soon as possible and submit the written report for review.

The written report must include:

- Name(s) of pupil(s) concerned and when/where incident occurred.
- Names of witnesses.
- Reason why force was necessary.
- How the incident began and progressed, details of pupil's behaviour, steps taken to defuse the situation, the degree of force used and for how long.
- The pupil's response and outcome of the incident.
- Details of any apparent injury to the pupil or damage to property.

Parents will be informed of the incident as soon as possible and an opportunity for a meeting to discuss it with the principal. Any incident will be recorded using the School's Record of Reasonable Force Incidents Form (Appendix 1). These will be retained for annual review by the Chairperson of the Board of Governors (Appendix 2).

Managing an Incident

Staff and pupils will be given any necessary emotional support or medical aid required. Members of staff trained in first aid will check for any injuries and counselling staff will be available to assist any staff or pupils requiring support. This policy document takes on board the best practice set out in the 'Regional Policy Framework on the use of Reasonable Force/safe Handling' (2004) as well as DENI Circulars 1999/9 and 2003/13 and the Human Rights Act, 1998.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Governors, taking into account any updated guidance or requirements issued by the Department of Education Northern Ireland (DENI). It forms part of the school's wider pastoral framework and should be considered alongside related policies to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the school's approach to pupil welfare and behaviour.

Approval of Reasonable Force and Safe Handling Policy

Approved by Board of Governors

Acting Chairperson: *Mr F Close*

Date: 23 / 09 / 25

Acting Principals: *Mrs Bailey and Miss Loughrey*

Date: 23 / 09 / 25

Date of Next Review: September 2028



Glenann Primary School

Record of Reasonable Force Incidents

Date of Incident		Where incident took place	
Names of pupil(s) involved)			
Reason why Reasonable Force was applied: (Please tick to select reason why force was applied)			
	Self -defence: Imminent risk of injury to staff.		
	A pupil attacked another pupil.		
	Pupils were fighting.		
	A pupil was in danger of causing injury or damage by accident, rough play or misuse of dangerous materials/substances.		
	There was a developing risk of injury to another pupil or person.		
	There was significant damage to property.		
	Other Details:		
Details of the Incident (How the incident began and progressed, details of pupil's behaviour, steps taken to defuse the situation, the degree of force used and for how long)			
The pupil's response and outcome of the incident			
Details of any apparent injury to the pupil or damage to property			
Witnesses of Incident		Signature/s:	
Signed (Principal)			



Glenann Primary School

Reasonable Force Incidents

Academic Year (<i>Enter year</i>)	
I have reviewed the entries of the Reasonable Force incidents that took place in the academic year of (<i>Enter year</i>)	
Signed: Chair of the Board of Governors	
Date:	

Academic Year (<i>Enter year</i>)	
I have reviewed the entries of the Reasonable Force incidents that took place in the academic year of (<i>Enter year</i>)	
Signed: Chair of the Board of Governors	
Date:	

Academic Year (<i>Enter year</i>)	
I have reviewed the entries of the Reasonable Force incidents that took place in the academic year of (<i>Enter year</i>)	
Signed: Chair of the Board of Governors	
Date:	

Academic Year (<i>Enter year</i>)	
I have reviewed the entries of the Reasonable Force incidents that took place in the academic year of (<i>Enter year</i>)	
Signed: Chair of the Board of Governors	
Date:	