

**HOLY FAMILY PRIMARY SCHOOL
MAGHERAFELT**



**THE USE OF REASONABLE FORCE
POLICY STATEMENT**

Context

The School will seek to create a safe and secure environment where all pupils are enabled to achieve their full potential while being educated with respect and dignity. Our policy on the use of reasonable force is, therefore, developed to enable staff to achieve this purpose.

No matter how skilfully and sensitively pupils are managed, a small minority will occasionally engage in aggressive behaviour that threatens the safety of other pupils and staff. We in Holy Family Primary School acknowledge our responsibility to the pupils in our charge and will, therefore, take all reasonable steps to ensure that the welfare of pupils is safeguarded and that their safety is preserved.

Aims of our policy

- To create a learning environment in which young people and adults **feel safe**
- To protect every person in the **School community** from harm
- To protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful
- To put in place guidance for staff (both 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 reasonable force might be applied.

The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils in the School will never require any form of physical intervention. However, a small number of pupils who may occasionally exhibit disturbed, or distressing behaviour, may require some form of physical intervention by staff. In order to minimise the risk of incidents escalating unnecessarily due to lack of foresight, planning and training, the School will carry out a risk assessment under two headings:

1. Environmental Risk Assessment;
 - situations or locations with the potential for increased risk
 - seek representative staff and pupil opinion
 - recommend to the Board of Governors appropriate supervision arrangements.
2. Individual Risk Assessment;
 - identify pupils whose behaviour gives cause for concern
 - consult with parents
 - advise staff of what action to effect in terms of managing such pupils and situations
 - consider the provision of additional support.

These arrangements are established to minimise the likelihood of action being required. However, in the event of restraint being required, the absolute minimum amount must be exercised to diffuse any given situation.

Individual Risk Assessment

If the School becomes aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way that may require the use of reasonable force, it will plan how to respond if the situation arises.

Definition Of Reasonable Force

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.

The use of reasonable force will always depend on the circumstances of the case and staff should take the following into consideration:

- whether it is reasonable to use force, and the degree of force that could reasonably be employed, given the age, sex physical strength, size, understanding, medical conditions and any special educational needs of the pupil;
- the use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it. Physical force could not be justified to prevent a pupil from committing a trivial misdemeanour, or in a situation that clearly could be resolved without force and,
- the degree of force employed should be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or the consequences it is intended to prevent. Any force used should always be the minimum needed to defuse the situation.

Use And Forms Of Reasonable Force

Reasonable force should be limited to emergency situations and used only as a last resort in situations where:

- 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, rough play or 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 him/herself or others;
- a pupil absconds from a class to leave School. This will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school.

Physical intervention in these circumstances may take several forms, e.g.:

- physically interposing between pupils'
- blocking a pupil's path;
- holding;
- leading a pupil by the hand or arm;
- shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back; or
- (in extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds.

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, such as the examples below, will not be permitted under any circumstances:

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

When used, physical intervention should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a pupil's action or perhaps by removing a physical object which could be used to harm him/herself or others. It should, at all times, be carefully applied and may be eased by degrees as the pupil calms down in response to the physical contact. The child should be advised throughout that physical intervention will cease when he/she calms down.

The use of restraint is only likely to be needed in exceptional circumstances if a pupil appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and behaviour and is presenting a threat to him/herself or others. The use of reasonable force should involve a calm and measured approach at all times and be in accordance with agreed strategies and action steps.

Preventative Strategies

All teachers need to be aware of strategies and techniques for dealing with difficult pupils and steps, which they can take to defuse and calm a situation. The strategies listed below as examples will be influenced by the age of the pupil(s) and the context in which they are applied.

- Move calmly and confidently;
- Make simple, clear statements;
- Intervene early;
- Try to maintain eye contact;
- If necessary summon help before the problem escalates; and
- If possible, remove any audience from the immediate location.

Action Steps

1. Tell the pupil who is misbehaving to stop and tell him/her the possible consequences of failure to do so;
2. If possible, summon another adult;
3. Continue to communicate in a calm manner with the pupil throughout the incident;
4. Make it clear that physical intervention will cease as soon as it is no longer necessary;
5. Appropriate follow-up action should be taken, which may include:
 - Providing medical support;
 - Providing respite for those involved; and
 - Accessing external advice/support.

A calm and measured approach to a situation is needed and staff should never give the impression that they have lost their temper or are acting out of anger or frustration when handling a problem.

There may be times when members of staff should not intervene in an incident without help (unless it is an emergency)

Intervention guidelines

There are situations where staff should not intervene without help. Assistance should be sought when dealing, for example, with:

- An older pupil;
- A physically large pupil;
- Situations involving a large number of pupils;
- When the teacher believes that he/she may be at risk of injury.

In those circumstances where the member of staff has decided that it is not appropriate to restrain the pupil without help, he/she should:

- Remove other pupils who might be at risk;
- Summon assistance from colleagues;
- Where necessary, contact the police;
- Inform the pupil(s) that help will be arriving; and
- Continue to attempt to defuse the situation orally, and try to prevent the incident from escalating.

Legal Position

Governors, staff, parents and pupils should be involved in a review of this policy. New staff should be given a copy of the policy and a senior member of staff will be selected to advise on its implementation.

The School SENCO should keep staff informed about pupils with special educational needs who may require special attention with regard to their physical management.

Staff will consult with the SENCO regarding any concerns that they have about the physical management of pupils with special educational needs.

The policy will be subject to periodic review.

Record Keeping

All incidents involving the use of reasonable force must be recorded in a detailed, contemporaneous written report in accordance with School procedures. The School will keep an up-to-date record of all such incidents. Such records may be required for future reference. Immediately following any such incident the member of staff concerned should inform the Designated Teacher and the Principal and provide a written report.

Parents/carers will be contacted as soon as possible by one of the designated teachers and the incident explained to them. This action will also be recorded as detailed in procedures.

Staff should keep their own copy of any written report.

Record Of The Use Of Reasonable Force

Date of incident:	Time of incident:
Pupil name:	Date of Birth:
Member(s) of staff involved:	
Adult witness(es) to incident:	
Pupil(s) witness to incident:	
Outline of event leading to incident, including place where incident occurred, description of pupil's behaviour and steps taken to defuse the situation other than physical intervention:	

Outline of incident including reason for use of reasonable force, how it was applied and for how long:

Measures taken following the incident (eg respite for pupil(s), support for teacher(s):

Description of any injury(ies) sustained by anyone, any subsequent treatment and any damage to property:

Brief description of any subsequent inquiry/complaint or action:	
Date parent/carer informed of incident:	Time:
By whom informed:	
Outline of parent/carer response:	

Signature of staff completing report:	Date:
Signature of designated teacher to whom incident was reported:	Date:
Signature of Principal	Date:

Complaints

If an incident occurs in the school involving the use of reasonable force by a teacher, the procedures governing such incidents should be followed.

This will include informing the parent(s) / guardian(s) of the child.

In the event of a subsequent complaint made against a member of staff either by or on behalf of the child, this should be dealt with in accordance with the School's complaints procedures.

Summary

Although it is anticipated that incidences involving the use of reasonable force or physical intervention will be infrequent, all staff will be made aware of the issues relating to the use of reasonable force and physical intervention through this policy statement as well as procedures and practices relating to School discipline and child protection procedures.