



# **POLICY ON SAFE HANDLING AND THE USE OF REASONABLE FORCE**

Based on the Regional Policy Framework on the Use of Reasonable  
Force/Safe Handling

## **Safe Handling and the Use of Reasonable Force**

### **Rationale**

The purpose of St Clare's Primary School is the broad balanced education of each child. The paramount responsibility of every person connected with the school is the safety and welfare of the children in their care. Through a sense of order and a sense of purpose the care and education of children are made more effective.

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

Safe handling shall be carried out in a professional way in the best interests of the child, (reasonable, proportionate and justified will be the basis on which any problem will be addressed).

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

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.
4. To provide both teaching and non-teaching staff with guidance relating to circumstances in which reasonable force may be used and how such reasonable force might be applied.

### **Reasonable Force as a Possible Necessity**

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:

1. Committing an offence;
2. Causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself; or
3. 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 Clare's Primary School the use of reasonable force with the 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. **It 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 material and items;
- A pupil running in a corridor or on stairs 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.

### **Staff Authorised to Use Restrictive Physical Intervention**

By reason of their conditions of service, the Headteacher can authorise all teachers to use restrictive physical intervention. All Classroom Assistants may also be authorised to use restrictive physical intervention.

Authorisation is not given to volunteers or parents.

### **Definitions 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 pull with the hand on the back of the shoulder; or
- (in extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds.

### **Safe Handling and Reasonable Force Procedures**

- Tell the pupils to stop.
- Clearly state the desired behaviour.
- Tell the pupil that handling will take place if inappropriate behaviour continues.
- During handling tell the pupil that contact will stop when he/she is ready to behave appropriately.
- If a member of staff feels at risk send for staff support.

## **Unaccepted and Unreasonable Force**

The following uses of force will always be considered unreasonable and therefore must not be used:

- Holding around the neck;
- Any hold that may restrict breathing;
- Kicking, slapping or punching;
- Forcing limbs against joints;
- Tripping;
- Holding by the hair; and
- Holding the pupil face down on the ground.

## **Anticipating the Use of Reasonable Force**

Having completed a 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 potential to lead to incidents requiring the use of reasonable force.

If it is considered likely that a pupil will be sufficiently disruptive to require the use of reasonable force (whether for medical, special needs or other reason), the parents/carers will be consulted and an appropriate plan of action agreed.

Teachers and Supervisory Assistants will only excuse the use of reasonable force in extreme circumstances. In an emergency any member of staff will have the authority to use reasonable force.

## **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 name of any witnesses; the reasons for the use of force; an account of what happened including the pupil response and the outcome of the incident; the details of any damage and injury. These will be entered on the Incident Report Form which will then be copied to relevant parties.

## **Complaint**

Any complaints 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 or other adult employed in school.

## **Review**

This policy has been written and agreed in response to the Department of Education Circular 1999/9 and the guidance material issued by DENI and the Regional Policy Framework of May 2004 on the use of reasonable force/safe handling. It will be reviewed annually in relations to on going individual and environmental risk analyses, advice and training. It will form part of the school's overall Pastoral Care Policy.

## **Appendix**

- i. Incident Report Form
- ii. Risk Management Plan
- iii. Positive Handling Plan