

Our Lady of Lourdes School Ballymoney

Caring, Sharing, Learning together to meet the future

Safe Handling Policy



Safe Handling Policy

1. Rationale

The School's aim is to ensure that Our Lady of Lourdes School is a safe and secure environment for all pupils and staff, where all children are enabled to achieve their full potential and to be educated with respect and dignity.

2. Aims

- To create a learning environment in which pupils 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 all staff so that they are clear about the circumstances in which they might use reasonable force to restrain pupils and how such reasonable forces might be applied.

3. Definition of Reasonable Force

The Education Order (NI) 1998 (Part 11 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) any of the following, namely:

- a. committing any 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 that behaviour occurs during teaching a session or otherwise”

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. 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 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. The use of any degree of force is unlawful if the particular circumstances do not warrant the use of physical force. Therefore, 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

4. Risk Assessment

The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils in Our Lady of Lourdes School will never require any form of physical intervention, however, a small number of pupils may exhibit disturbed, or distressing behaviour, which 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:

I. Environmental Risk Assessment

II. Individual Risk Assessment

4.1 Environmental Risk Assessment

- The school will carry out a risk analysis to identify those situations or locations where there is an increased risk of incidents happening and decide the appropriate type and level of supervision.
- An analysis will be made of all past incidents in the school to identify medium to high risk locations. Staff and pupil opinion will be canvassed to augment this information.
- On the basis of the analysis, the Principal and Senior Leadership Team will make recommendations to the Board of Governors on the type and level of supervision which will be required to minimise risks.

4.2 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. Such planning will address:

- **Consulting parents** to ensure that they are clear about the specific action the school might need to take;
- **Briefing Staff** to ensure they know exactly what action they should be taking. This may identify a need for training or guidance;
- **Managing the pupil**, for example, reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict;
- **Ensuring that additional support** can be summoned wherever possible.

Environmental and Individual Risk Assessment, allied to careful forward planning, should help result in a reduction in serious incidents. However, where they occur, the above strategies should help to ensure that any force used is the minimum necessary to achieve the desired outcome.

5. Use and Forms of Reasonable Force

5.1 When might it be appropriate to use 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 is 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 him/herself or others
- A pupil absconds from a class to leave the school (this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school)
- In circumstances where the pupil absconds the school will make every reasonable effort to contact the parent/guardian

5.2 What is permissible?

Physical intervention may take several forms:

- 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

- In extreme circumstances using more restrictive holds

5.3 What is forbidden by law?

The law strictly forbids 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 (which are not exhaustive) 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

- Holding the pupil face down on the ground

5.4 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/her 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.

5.5 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/her 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 (see appendix 2)

5.6 There may be times when members of staff should not intervene in an incident without help (unless it is an emergency) (see appendix 3)

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 We will endeavour to ensure that all staff know and understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to the management of pupils, including Teachers, Support Staff, Parents supporting in the classroom.

6.2 Legislation allows “members of staff” to use reasonable force and defines a member of staff as “any teacher who works at the school and any person who, with the authority of the Principal, has lawful control or charge of pupils at school “(see appendix 1). The Principal will confirm with all members of staff whether or not they meet the terms of this definition.

This is intended to clarify who can use reasonable force and in what circumstances. However, in an emergency, if it is likely that a pupil will sustain an injury or injure another pupil or adult, any member of staff can intervene and use reasonable force, to protect a pupil, other staff or defend themselves.

6.3 Governor’s, Staff, Parents and Pupils will be involved in the development of this policy and will be involved in any review. New staff will be given a copy of the policy and a senior member of staff will advise on its implementation.

6.4 Staff will be kept informed of planning in relation to individual pupils who are considered likely to pose serious behavioural problems.

6.5 The school SENCOS will 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 SENCOS regarding any concerns which they have about the physical management of pupils’ special educational needs.

6.6 Line management and lines of reporting with regard to the use of reasonable force will be the same as those for Pastoral Care/Safeguarding.

6.7 Parents will be provided with a copy of the school’s written policy on the use of reasonable force, which is an integral part of the school’s policy for promoting positive behaviour.

7. Record Keeping

7.1 All incidents involving the use of reasonable force will 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 (see appendix 3). Such records may be required for future reference. Immediately following such incidents, the member of staff concerned should inform the Principal or Senior member of staff and provide a written report.

7.2 Parents/Guardians will be contacted as soon as possible and the incident explained to them. This action will also be recorded as detailed in procedures. (See appendix 4).

7.3 Staff should keep their own copy of any written report.

8. Complaints

8.1 If an incident occurs in school involving the use of reasonable force by a Teacher, the procedures governing such incidents will be followed. This will include informing the Parents/Guardians of the child.

8.2 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 procedures. A dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation either under disciplinary procedures, or by the PSNI and Social Services Department, under Safeguarding Procedures.

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

9. Training and Development

9.1 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 as well as procedures and practices relating to school discipline and child protection procedures. As part of the school's training and development policy, all staff will receive appropriate training in the use of preventative strategies and approaches for managing difficult situations when they arise.

10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy will be reviewed in line with the school policy review cycle.

APPENDIX 1

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:

1. Move calmly and confidently
2. Make simple, clear statements
3. Intervene early
4. Try to maintain eye contact
5. If necessary summon help before the problem escalates
6. If possible, remove audience from the immediate location.

ACTION STEPS

- Tell the pupil who is misbehaving to stop and tell him/her the possible consequences of failure to do so.
- If possible, summon another adult.
- Continue to communicate with the pupil throughout the incident.
- Make it clear that physical intervention will cease as soon as it is no longer necessary.
- 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.

APPENDIX 2

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
- More than one pupil
- 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
- Continue to attempt to defuse the situation orally, and try to prevent the incident from escalating.



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School Poem

You're **unique** and **one of a kind**
Your life can be what you want
Take the days just one at a time
Count your blessings not your troubles
You'll make it through whatever comes along
Don't put limits on yourself
So many dreams are waiting to be realised
Decisions are too important to leave to chance
Reach for your **peak**, your **goal**, your **prize**
The longer one carries a problem the heavier it gets
Live a life of serenity not a life of regret
Remember that a **little love** goes a long way
A lot goes forever
Remember that **friendship** is a wise investment
Life's treasures are people. . .together
Realise that it is **never too late**
Do ordinary things in an extraordinary way
Have **health and happiness**
Take the time to **wish upon a star**
And don't forget – for even a day
How very **special** you are

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