



SAFE HANDLING POLICY

Date Ratified:	
Date of Review:	September 2024

This policy has been written following a consultation process, ratified by the Board of Governors and communicated to the school community as required. It will be monitored and reviewed as part of the school's policy review schedule.

SAFE HANDLING POLICY

Please note, this policy will be reviewed in accordance with the outcomes of the consultation on the use of restrictive and supportive practices in schools which is currently taking place. In the interim, any of our references to the use of safe handling in relation to maintaining good order or to prevent damage to property have been removed.

VISION STATEMENT

“Ballymagee is committed to providing a modern, dynamic learning environment where everyone is respected, feels safe and is valued. In partnership with parents and the community, we seek to empower children to reach their full potential through technologically rich, varied and stimulating learning opportunities which maximise individual skills and talents. By cultivating a love of learning we will enable our children to become independent thinkers, life-long learners, responsible future citizens and confident, caring contributors to society, in an ever changing world.”

In order to fulfil our vision statement we have a duty to provide a safe and secure environment for the entire school community – children and staff; and, to promote and sustain appropriate behaviour.

This policy has taken into consideration;

- Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 12, 16, 19); International 1989 (UK-1991);
- Children (NI) Order 1995 – duty and responsibility to protect
- Education (NI) Order 1998 (Article 3) – promotion of good behaviour and discipline;
- Education (NI) Order 1998 (Article 4) – powers to use reasonable force;
- Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003 (Articles 17, 18, 19) – duties of governors to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils;
- Human rights Act 1998 (Articles 3 + 5) – the right to education.

This policy has been developed in line with guidance from:

- DENI Circular 1999/9
- DE document “Towards a Model Policy in Schools on the Use of Reasonable Force”
- Pastoral care in Schools – Promoting Positive Behaviour
- Pastoral care in Schools – Child Protection paragraphs 69 – 72
- DENI Circular 2003/13 Welfare and Protection of Pupils

DEFINITION OF REASONABLE FORCE

The Education Order 1998 (part 2 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:

- *Committing any offence;*
- *Causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself);*
- *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 a teaching session or otherwise.”*
(This Order is under review)

Reasonable force is the minimum force necessary to prevent physical harm to self and/or others, but which also attempts to preserve the dignity of all concerned.

Ballymagee Primary School actively promotes positive behaviour management strategies as well as other preventative strategies and therefore physical intervention will only occur in emergency situations.

One of our preventative strategies is Risk Assessment. This will be employed in Ballymagee with children who are known to exhibit disturbing or distressing behaviour. Where this risk is foreseeable the school will plan and source any available training for teachers and ancillary staff as appropriate. This will be considered from two perspectives (a) an environmental risk assessment and (b) an individual risk assessment and details will be included in The Behaviour Plan.

The use of reasonable force should, at all times, involve a calm and measured approach appropriate to the child concerned in accordance with the following:

- Tell the child to stop the behaviour;
 - Ask the child to behave properly stating the desired behaviour;
 - Warn the child that you will use physical intervention if they do not comply;
 - Repeatedly state that the intervention will stop when the inappropriate behaviour stops.
- If the adult feels at risk then assistance will be sought from the nearest staff.

The forms of reasonable force the school will use will depend on individual circumstances and have been agreed as:

- Separating children who are fighting or are about to fight;
- Blocking a child's path;
- Holding – but not in a way likely to cause injury;
- Leading a child by the arm;
- Shepherding away by placing hands on the backs of elbows;
- Using more restrictive holds (in extreme circumstances)
- Children with more complex needs or disabilities e.g. blood condition or mobility challenges, contact should be minimised to blocking, reassuring etc. whilst maintaining their safety **until** an adult from home can be contacted.

For Nursery and Foundation Stage, school staff will be engaged in activities that require safe handling on a regular basis for a variety of reasons. These include:

- Assisting a child with toileting;
- Physically prompting a young child as part of a behaviour or educational programme;
- Reacting instinctively to a young child who may try to run off;
- Teaching a child to hold an adult's arm or hand while walking in a corridor.

There are limits to the use of reasonable force. The child's health and safety should always be considered and monitored; and ceased once the situation has been resolved and the child is calm.

The law strictly prohibits the use of force as a form of corporal punishment, as a punishment, to intentionally cause pain, injury, or humiliation and these would also contravene our Child Protection Policy. Staff should never act in a way that would be reasonably expected to cause injury by:

- Holding around the neck;
- Holding that will restrict breathing;
- Kicking, slapping or punching or using any implement;
- Forcing limbs against joints;
- Tripping;
- Holding or pulling by the hair;
- Holding the child face down on the ground;
- Touching or holding in any way that might be considered indecent.

PROCEDURES FOR THE USE OF REASONABLE FORCE

The following procedures have been agreed by the staff and adopted by the Board of Governors. Parents and children will be informed of these procedures within the provisions for Pastoral Care.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Reasonable force/safe handling may be used by any member of staff who is authorised by the Principal to have lawful charge of children, but only when other behaviour management strategies have failed.

In Ballymagee Primary School, this authorisation is given to teachers, classroom assistants and supervisory assistants.

In carrying out their role, it is the responsibility of the authorised person to make a judgment between making an intervention (using reasonable force) by placing him/herself in a dangerous situation or standing back and allowing colleagues or children to face a potential danger.

It is reasonable to expect a member of staff to engage in some risk where there is evidence of danger to others and that intervention has a good chance of success and where all other behaviour management strategies have been exhausted.

All staff will have regular awareness raising of related issues, behaviour management strategies and preventative strategies.

It would be reasonable to expect members of staff to intervene where:

- Action is necessary in self-defence or defence of others;
- There is a developing risk of injury to others;
- A child attacks a member of staff or other;
- Children are fighting;
- A child is causing, or at risk of causing, injury by accident, rough play, misuse of dangerous materials, substances or objects;
- A child is running in a manner and place likely to cause injury to self or others;
- A child absconds from class or tries to leave school because a primary age pupil is deemed to be at risk should they succeed in leaving either;
- A child persistently refuses to leave a classroom, playground or other area;

It is not reasonable to expect members of staff to put themselves at personal risk solely to safeguard property.

RECORD KEEPING

All incidents involving the use of reasonable force will be recorded by the teaching staff in an incident book held by the Principal. The Chair of the Board of Governors and the Principal will review annually the entries in this book.

Following a serious incident the member of staff involved will immediately inform the Principal or Vice Principal and the incident recorded on the Incident Record Form (Appendix 1). The child's views may also be recorded – if appropriate considering the age of the child.

A copy of this will be provided to the Chair of the Board of Governors at the next convened meeting for signing.

POST INCIDENT

If necessary, staff and children will be given emotional support.

If needed, basic first aid treatment will be given and medical help if necessary.

Principal, Vice-Principal and Designated Teacher for Child Protection will be responsible for checking for injuries and arranging follow up assistance.

Parents/Carers will be informed as and when appropriate. The incident will be fully explained to them and all conversations and outcomes recorded in the incident book.

Should a parent have a complaint about a member of staff either by or on behalf of a child this will be dealt with in accordance with the School Complaints Procedure which will also follow Circular 1999/10, Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection.

RECORD OF SAFE HANDLING / THE USE OF REASONABLE FORCE

Child's Name:		Class:	
Teacher:			
Teacher or Adult Reporting the Use of Force:			
Brief Details of the Incident:			

I confirm that my use of reasonable force was taken only after all other means had been tried and that my use of force was fully in accordance with the school's policy.

Signed:		Date:	
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I confirm that the use of reasonable force was investigated by me and that the use of force was fully justified, reasonable and in accordance with the school's policy.

Principal:		Date:	
Chair of Governors:		Date:	