

Scoil Ghramadaí Naomh Iósaef



Safe Handling 2025 - 26

SENCO: Mr N.Kelly

Policy Author	Mr N.Kelly
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This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

June 2025

Introduction

We, in St Joseph's Grammar Donaghmore, feel that the need to use reasonable force to restrain or control a pupil in our school will be very rare. Our pastoral care and positive behaviour for learning policies aim to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment in which all our pupils can learn and develop their full potential. The application of reasonable force to restrain or control a pupil is to be used as a last resort, only when other behaviour management strategies have failed, and when the pupil, other pupils, members of staff or property are at risk, or the pupil is seriously compromising good order and discipline.

Aims

- To create a learning environment in which young people and adults feel safe and to protect every person 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 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.

What is meant by reasonable force?

The law regards reasonableness as “enough force to stop whatever was about to happen from happening”.

- The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it.
- Any force used should always be the minimum.
- The degree of force might depend on the age, level of understanding and any physical disability the pupil may have.

Who may use reasonable force?

Article 4 of the Education (N.J.) Order 1998 authorises teachers to use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a pupil from:

- committing an offence;
- causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of any person (inc. the pupil themselves);
- 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.

Other members of staff, authorised by the Principal, are also authorised to use reasonable force.

The right of a member of staff to use reasonable force applies where the pupil concerned is on the school premises and when they have been authorised to have lawful control in charge of the pupil concerned elsewhere e.g. supervision of pupils in bus queues, on a field trip or out of school activity.

When is it appropriate to use reasonable force?

Reasonable force should only be used where other behaviour management strategies have failed.

Staff should always try to deal with a situation through using preventative strategies before using reasonable force. Staff should never act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury.

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, 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 they might cause an accident likely to injure themselves or others;
- A pupil absconds from a class to leave school (NB this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school).

What is not reasonable force:

- Touching or holding a pupil in any way that might be considered indecent;
- Use of force as a punishment or to intentionally cause pain, injury or humiliation;
- Holding around the neck or any hold that might restrict breathing;
- Kicking, slapping, tripping, punching, holding by the hair or holding a pupil face down on the ground.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal and SLT will:

- Ensure that all staff know and understand their roles and responsibilities;
- Confirm with members of staff if they meet the legal definition of having lawful control or charge of pupils at the school;
- Ask the LSC to update staff on pupils with a special educational need who may require special attention with regard to the physical management;
- Keep staff informed in relation to pupils who pose serious behavioural problems;
- Inform parents of an incident (involving the use of force) with their child;
- Complete Record Sheet (Appendix 1).
- Carry out risk assessments for any pupil who may require some form of physical intervention (Appendix 2 - Environmental and Individual)

Staff will:

- Attend training as and when required by the principal;
- Follow guidance given by the Principal or relevant member of SLT;
- Consult with the Principal/SENCO regarding concerns about the physical management of pupils;
- Provide a written report regarding use of reasonable force to the Principal or another member of the Safeguarding Team in his absence;

Pupils/Parents/Carers will:

- Report any concerns immediately to the Principal or a member of the Safeguarding Team;
- Contribute to reviews and evaluations of this policy as and when required.

Record Keeping

All incidents involving the use of reasonable force should be recorded in a detailed, contemporaneous written report in accordance with school procedures. The school should keep an up-to-date record of all such incidents (see Appendix 1). Such records may be required for future reference. Immediately following any such incident, the member of staff concerned should inform the Principal or a member of the Safeguarding Team and provide a written report.

Parents/carers should be contacted as soon as possible and the incident explained to them.

This action will also be recorded as detailed in procedures (see Appendix 1).

Staff should keep their own copy of any written report.

All incidents involving reasonable force must be recorded in the incident book.

Complaints

If an incident occurs in 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)/carer(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. A dispute about the use of force by a member of staff might lead to an investigation either under disciplinary procedures, or by the police and Social Services Department under child protection procedures.

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

Monitoring and Evaluation

Members of the Safeguarding Team will organise training for all staff on the use of reasonable force. 'Physical Contact with Pupils' is included in the school's *Professional Conduct Policy for Staff*.

Links to Other School Policies

This policy complements and supports a range of school policies including;

- Addressing-Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Drugs Education Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Positive Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Professional Conduct of Staff Policy
- School Trips Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy