

RICHMOND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Reasonable Force & Safe Handling Policy



Definition of Reasonable Force

The Education (NI) Order 1998 (part II 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); or*
- *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."*

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 Aims

- To protect all members of the school community from harm.
- To protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful.
- To provide adequate information and training for staff so that they are clear as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour and to deal effectively with violent or potentially violent situations.
- To give full support to staff who have been assaulted or have suffered verbal abuse from pupils or others.

Risk Assessment

Although most pupils in Richmond Primary School will never require any form of physical restraint, staff may have to deal with some pupils who exhibit disturbed, distressed and distressing behaviour. It is therefore necessary to carry out risk assessment.

We will attempt to reduce risk by managing:

- The environment
- Body language
- The way we talk
- The way we act

What does it mean to restrain a child?

Physical restraint is the positive application of reasonable force with the intention of protecting the child from harming himself or others or seriously damaging property. The proper use of physical restraint requires skill and judgement, as well as knowledge of non-harmful methods of restraining.

Why use restraint?

Physical restraint should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a child's action or perhaps by removing a physical object, which could be used to harm him/herself or others. Physical restraint skilfully applied may be eased by degrees as the child calms down in response to the physical contact.

The use of reasonable force is only to be employed in exceptional circumstances or an emergency where a pupil appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and whose behaviour is presenting a threat to himself/herself or others. A member of staff should not intervene in an incident without help if there is a risk that he/she may be injured or may endanger his/her life.

General Aims

The staff in Richmond Primary recognise that the use of reasonable force is only one of the strategies available to secure pupil safety/well-being and also to maintain good order and discipline.

Our policy on the use of reasonable force is part of our overall pastoral care policy and closely related to our policies on managing pupil behaviour in the "Discipline Policy" and "Child Protection Programme".

Environmental Risk Assessment

We will complete a risk analysis within the school and put in place strategies to minimise these risks in identified locations.

Individual Risk Assessment

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

Such planning needs to address:

- Managing the pupil (e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict, holds to be used if necessary);
 - Involving the 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.
- Ensuring that additional support can be summoned if appropriate.

Procedures

There may be circumstances when a member of staff may have to decide between making an intervention/using reasonable force by placing him/herself in a dangerous situation or

standing back and thereby allowing colleagues or pupils to face a potential danger. There will always be an element of personal judgment in these decisions and there is the possibility of someone being injured. However, it is reasonable to expect a member of staff to engage in some risk where there is evidence of danger to others and intervention has a good chance of being effective. Staff should not,

however, put themselves in personal danger merely to, safeguard property.

A teacher or other authorised person(s) on the school premises can use reasonable force/safe handling or when authorised elsewhere e.g., supervision of pupils in bus queues, a field trip, on other authorised out of school activities such as a sporting event or educational trip. Reasonable force should be limited to emergency situations and *used only as a last resort when all other behaviour management strategies have been exhausted and where:*

- Action is necessary in self defence or because there is imminent risk of injury to another pupil or person;
- There is a developing risk of injury to another pupil or person, or significant damage to property;
- A pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline.

Examples that fall into the above categories are:

- 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 s/he might cause an accident likely to injure her/himself or others;
- A pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave school (Note: this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school);
- A pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson.

Forms of Reasonable Force

When other behaviour management strategies have failed -it should be the minimum intervention or force that should reasonably be employed depending on the age, sex, physical strength, size, understanding, medical condition and any special needs of the pupil and used in a way that preserves the dignity and respect of all concerned. The use of reasonable force/ safe handling should involve a *calm and measured approach at all times appropriate to the particular pupil and be in accordance with the schools agreed strategies* and the following procedures:

- *Tell the pupil to stop the inappropriate behaviour and state possible consequences of failure to do so*
- *Ask the pupil to behave appropriately, clearly stating the desired behaviour*
- *Tell the pupil that physical intervention will take place if inappropriate behaviour continues*
- *During the incident repeatedly reassure the pupil and tell him/her that physical contact will stop as soon as he/she is ready to behave appropriately.*
- *If the teacher, classroom assistant or supervisory assistant feels at risk, e.g. from a large or older group of pupils, send for the nearest staff support.*
- *Appropriate follow-up action should be taken, which may include*
 - *Providing medical support*
 - *Providing respite for those involved*

Agreed forms of interventions for: -

Early years staff and designated classroom assistants may be involved in activities that require safe handling on a regular basis for educational, therapeutic, health and safety purposes. Examples of good practice from Richmond Primary School staff will include:

- Teaching a child to move appropriately whilst inside the school grounds / building or on a visit outside school.

- Reacting instinctively to a situation by holding or restraining a child who is running onto a busy road;
- Physically prompting a young child as part of an educational or behaviour programme;

Statement for Parents

In keeping with our home/school partnership, we will inform all parents/carers of our policy on Reasonable force /Safe Handling

The statement will highlight:

- Our emphasis on care and protection for everyone within our school community
- Our endeavour to handle situations with care and responsibility.
- Our intent to apply follow-up and repair strategies.
- The statement will outline:
 - When staff are authorised to use reasonable physical intervention.
 - What steps will be taken after an incident has been dealt with.

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| <i>Separating pupils who are fighting, or who are about to fight</i> | <i>Move pupils apart by placing a hand on a shoulder of each pupil or in extreme cases use restrictive hold on attacker.</i> |
| <i>Blocking a pupil's path</i> | <i>Step in front of pupil & place hands on shoulders.</i> |
| <i>Holding</i> | <i>Hold pupil by wrist.</i> |
| <i>Leading a pupil</i> | <i>Place hands on shoulder/back or take hold of hand.</i> |
| <i>Shepherding a pupil away.</i> | <i>By placing hands on the backs of elbows</i> |
| <i>Restrictive holds (in extreme circumstances).</i> | <i>Hold arms from behind and press against sides of body.</i> |

The responsibilities of staff, pupils and parents/carers in resolving situations.

Health and Safety

When using reasonable force/physical intervention/restraint/safe handling, the pupil's health and safety must always be considered and monitored. Physical interventions should involve the minimum amount of force necessary to resolve the situation and calm the pupil.

Limits on the Use of Force

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 would contravene our Child Protection Policy. Staff should never act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:

- Holding around the neck;
- Any hold that might restrict breathing;
- Kicking, slapping or punching or using any implement; forcing limbs against joints; tripping;
- Holding or pulling by the hair;
- Holding the pupil face down on the ground;
- Staff should also avoid touching or holding a pupil in any way that might be considered indecent.

Is it appropriate to use reasonable force in every situation?

Reasonable force should not be used automatically in every situation nor should it be used as a form of discipline. In a non-urgent situation, reasonable force should only be used when other behaviour management strategies have failed. That consideration is particularly appropriate in situations where the aim is to maintain good order and discipline, and there is no direct risk to people or property. Any action, which could exacerbate the situation needs to be avoided, and the risk of increasing the disruption or actually provoking an attack, need to be carefully evaluated. The age and level of understanding of the pupil is also very relevant in those circumstances - physical intervention to enforce compliance with staff instructions is likely to be increasingly inappropriate with older pupils and should never be used as a substitute for good behaviour management.

Physical Contact With Children

Integral to a clear understanding of standards of behaviour expected of staff is an understanding of the acceptable boundaries of physical contact with children and young people. The Code of Conduct makes it clear that it is unnecessary and unrealistic to suggest that staff should touch pupils only in emergencies.

Particularly with younger children, touching them is inevitable and can give welcome reassurance. However, staff must bear in mind that even perfectly innocent actions can sometimes be misconstrued. Children may find being touched uncomfortable or distressing for a variety of reasons. It is important for staff to be sensitive to a child or young person's reaction to physical contact and to act appropriately.

It is also essential not to touch pupils in ways, on parts of the body or in circumstances that might be considered inappropriate. It is also possible that physical contact may result in a child or young person's responding inappropriately this may in itself be indicative of abuse in another "setting" and staff should bring any concerns to the attention of the designated member of staff.

From 1 April 2015 any reference in this Policy to SELB is now known as Education Authority Southern Region.