

# Brookeborough Primary School



## ***Reasonable Force & Safe Handling Policy***

The school will review this policy in March 2025

Signed: A. Young (B.O.G.)

Date: March 2024

Signed: B Ovens (Principal)

Date: March 2024

## **Introduction**

The following purposes underpin Brookeborough Primary School's policy and practices to:

- create a learning environment in which young people and adults feel safe;
- protect every person in the school community from harm;
- protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention, which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful; and
- develop and implement guidance for staff (teaching and non-teaching) so that they are clear about the circumstances in which they might use reasonable force to restrain pupils and how such force might be applied.

## **Legislative Framework**

This policy has been formulated with due consideration to the current legislation.

## **Rationale**

### Context

Our dual responsibility:

- providing a safe and secure environment for the entire school community (pupils and staff);
- promoting and sustaining appropriate behaviour;
- taking account of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- taking account of the Education (NI) Order 1998 (Article 3) which requires Boards of Governors to ensure that policies are designed to promote good behaviour and discipline on the part of the pupils;
- taking account of the Education (NI) Order 1998 (Article 4) which clarifies the powers of members of staff of a grant-aided school regarding the use of reasonable force;
- taking account of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003 (Articles 17 + 19) which imposes a duty on Boards of Governors to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils; and
- taking account of the Human Rights Act 1998 which provides for the right to education.



This policy and our procedures have been developed in line with all current DE guidance and legislation.

### **Links with Other Policies**

This policy is one of the overall Pastoral Policies and complements the school's Positive Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Protection Policy, Special Needs Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Complaints Policy, Care and Welfare Policy, Teaching and Learning Policy, Assessment Policy and our Staff Code of Conduct.

### **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.

All schools need to consider:

- planned interventions in which staff employ, where necessary, pre-arranged strategies based upon a risk assessment and recorded within the pupil's education plan; and
- emergency or unplanned use of force/intervention, which occurs in response to unforeseen events, e.g. pupil fights.

## Practices

### Preventative Strategies

Brookeborough Primary School actively promotes positive behaviour management strategies thus reducing the need for the use of any form of physical intervention, except in emergency situations.

### Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is one of our preventative strategies to minimise the risk of an incident escalating unnecessarily and will be a normal practice for our school where a pupil or a small number of pupils are known to exhibit disturbing or distressing behaviour (EBD). **Risk assessment will be considered only for those pupils where there is a foreseeable risk and will enable the school to plan and train staff accordingly.** Risk assessment will be considered from two perspectives: (a) environmental risk assessment; or (b) individual risk assessment. This should form part of the pupil's education plan (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2).

### Procedures - Support Structures

The following procedures have been agreed by the staff and adopted by the Board of Governors.

### Roles and Responsibilities

Reasonable force/safe handling can be used by any member of staff who is authorised by the Principal to have lawful control or charge of pupils, eg teachers, classroom assistants, supervisory assistants. The Principal will confirm with all staff those who are authorised to be in charge of pupils at any given time.

### Insurance

**All staff and any other adult** authorised by the Principal to supervise pupils, are adequately covered by the school's insurance provided they have followed the school's agreed policies and procedures.

## Procedures

We understand that there may be circumstances when a member of staff may have to decide between making an intervention and 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 may reduce or neutralise the risk.

Staff should not, however, put themselves in personal danger merely to safeguard property. Reasonable force/safe handling can be used by a teacher or other authorised person(s) on the school premises or when authorised elsewhere eg, supervision of pupils in bus queues, a field trip, or 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;
- there is a developing risk of 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 persistently refuses to obey an order to leave a classroom; or
- a pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson.

Where a dangerous or potentially dangerous situation arises, additional adult support will be summoned via another pupil or another member of staff. If an individual pupil is identified as likely to behave in a disruptive/inappropriate way (in line with his/her individual risk assessment and individual behaviour plan) that may require reasonable force/safe handling, the Principal/Leadership Team will draw up an individual plan for action and inform relevant staff.

### **Forms of Reasonable Force**

**When other behaviour management strategies have failed** - the minimum intervention or force needed will 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 school's agreed strategies and the following procedures:

- tell the pupil to stop the inappropriate behaviour;
- 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; and
- if the teacher, classroom assistant or supervisory assistant feels at risk, eg from a large or older group of pupils, send for the nearest staff support.

**Forms of interventions that members of staff may use will depend on the individual circumstances and may include:**

- **separating pupils who are fighting, or who are about to fight;**
- **blocking a pupil's path;**
- **restraining a pupil;**
- **breakaway techniques (eg when a member of staff is grabbed by a pupil);**
- **leading a pupil by the arm;**
- **shepherding a pupil away by placing hands on the backs of elbows; or**
- **using more restrictive holds (in extreme circumstances).**

### **Health and Safety**

When using reasonable force/physical intervention/restraint/safe handling, the pupil's and the staff members'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;
- holding in a way 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; and/or
- staff should also avoid touching or holding a pupil in any way that might be considered indecent.

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 his/her emotions and whose behaviour is presenting a threat to himself/herself and/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 if it may endanger his/her life.

### **Record Keeping**

All incidents involving the use of reasonable force must be recorded in the school's agreed pro-forma, "**Record/Report of The Use of Reasonable Force**" (See **Appendix 3**). The Principal will keep an accurate up-to-date record of all such incidents. Immediately following any incident, the member of staff concerned must inform the Principal and provide a contemporaneous written record/report.

### **Board of Governors**

The Chairperson of the Board of Governors and the Principal will review **annually** the entries in the Reasonable Force/Safe Handling incident book. Records of incidents will be kept until the date of the child's twenty-first birthday. In the event of the young person being over 18 when they leave school, records should be kept for 3 years after

their date of leaving. Confidentiality and the young person's right to privacy will always be respected.

The pupil's views should also be recorded as soon as possible, preferably on the same day, using where possible, the school's Incident Record Form (Appendix 3).

## **Post Incident Support**

### **Guidance**

The use of physical intervention can be upsetting to all concerned, therefore, it is important to ensure that staff and pupils are given emotional support and where required basic first-aid treatment. Immediate action should be taken to ensure that medical help is accessed for any injuries that require more than basic first-aid. All injuries should be reported and recorded in accordance with the school's procedures – parents/carers must be informed and allowed an opportunity to discuss the incident.

Where it is clear that the teacher/member of staff concerned needs further support, advice or training, the Principal should take prompt action to ensure it is provided. It will be the Principal's responsibility to:

- check for injuries or provide first-aid or arrange for medical aid; and
- to provide staff and children with support after incidents.

### **Post-Incident Support**

Post-incident support will be provided for any staff members involved in an incident where Reasonable Force was applied or could have been applied.

### **Contacting Parents**

Parents/carers should be contacted as soon as possible and the incident explained to them. This contact with parents must also be recorded in the **“Report Of The Use Of Reasonable Force Incident Record Form (Appendix 3)”**. Any complaint from a parent will be dealt with within the school's Complaints Policy/Procedures.

### **Complaints**

If an incident occurs in Brookeborough Primary School involving the use of reasonable force/restraint by a teacher, the procedures governing such incidents should be followed. This will include informing the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child as outlined above. 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 Policy/Procedure and in accordance with DE Circulars and legislation.

Staff who themselves are subject to physical violence or assault should be supported,

as appropriate, in taking any necessary action against an assailant.

## **Designated Teacher**

### **Guidance**

The Principal and the Designated Teacher for Child Protection will have special responsibility for providing guidance to other staff on the use of reasonable force/safe handling and for implementing and supporting the school's policy and procedures.

### **Training and Development**

All staff will have training in relation to awareness raising of issues relating to the use of reasonable force/safe handling, procedures and practices relating to behaviour management and child protection policy and procedures. This will take place every two years. All staff will receive appropriate training and development, in line with the school's Staff Development Policy, in the use of preventative strategies and approaches for managing difficult situations when they may arise.

### **Consultation & Review of Policy**

The following people were consulted about this policy:

- Children (School Council);
- Parents (sample group);
- All staff (Teaching and Ancillary); and
- Board of Governors.

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if required.

## **Brookeborough Primary School**

### **Reasonable Force/Safe Handling Policy**

#### **Appendix 1**

#### **Risk Assessment**

A small number of pupils may exhibit behaviour which may require some form of physical intervention by staff. To minimise the risk of incidents escalating unnecessarily due to lack of foresight, planning and training, schools should carry out a risk assessment from two perspectives:

- an environmental risk assessment; and
- individual risk assessments.

#### **Environmental Risk Assessment**

- Identify situations or locations where there is an increased risk of incidents happening.
- Analysis of past incidents to identify medium to high risk locations.
- Staff and pupils consulted.
- Individual pupil consulted.
- Decide the appropriate type and level of supervision.
- Principal and Leadership Team to make recommendations to the Board of Governors on the type and level of supervision to minimise risk.
- Implement plan.
- Review plan.

#### **Individual Risk Assessment**

Where a school is aware that a pupil is likely to behave in a disruptive way, that may require the use of reasonable force/safe handling, the school should plan its response by:



- consulting the pupil, as appropriate;
- consulting the parents – specific action the school may need to take;
- briefing staff – what action they should be taking (may require training or guidance);
- managing the pupil – e.g. reactive strategies to de-escalate a conflict;
- ensuring that additional support can be summoned wherever possible;
- implementing plan and review;
- reviewing Plan.

### Risk Reduction

Risk reduction should include:

- proactive measures to support the child effectively and prevent difficulties emerging;
- early interventions to help the child in difficult situations and avert problems; and
- planned measures to manage the child and others safely, when unavoidable difficulties arise

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**Appendix 2**

Risk Assessment Proforma

**NAME OF PUPIL:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DOB.** \_\_\_\_\_ **AGE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SEN REGISTER CODE OF PRACTICE STAGE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PREVIOUS & CURRENT SUPPORT:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**EDUCATION PLAN:** \_\_\_\_\_

**RISK ASSESSMENT COMPLETED BY**

**MEMBER OF STAFF:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNED: (Date)** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Principal)**

**Consultation has been carried out...**

Please tick ✓ as appropriate

With the pupil	
With other pupils	
With the Parents/Guardian	
With other staff	

Brookeborough Primary School

Report on the Use of Reasonable Force

**Appendix 3**

Incident Record Form

Completed by staff member(s) in consultation with child

**Date of Incident:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pupil's Name.** \_\_\_\_\_ **Class:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Staff Involved in use of restraint:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Role:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Events Leading up to the Incident**

**Where did the incident start?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What was happening at the time?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Describe the event that occurred**

When did the incident occur?

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Where did the incident occur? \_\_\_\_\_

What action was taken to try to deescalate the situation before using restraint?

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What behaviour was the child presenting that warranted restraint/physical intervention (Please tick appropriate box)

At risk of injury to self or others  At risk of significant damage to property   
Comprising good order and discipline  At risk of committing a criminal offence

What do you believe would have happened if there had been no physical intervention?

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How was the pupil held? \_\_\_\_\_

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How long did the pupil need to be held? \_\_\_\_\_

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Was anybody injured Yes/No

If yes, please give details \_\_\_\_\_

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Name of member of staff who verbally checked pupil for injury after reasonable force was applied? \_\_\_\_\_

Has the pupil been physically restrained before? Yes  No

Implications for Future Planning

Does this pupil have an individual behaviour/education plan **Yes/No**

Do changes need to be made to any of the following?

(Please tick appropriate box)

The environment e.g. organisation, curriculum

Targets for teaching new skills

Reinforcement strategies

Defusing and calming strategies

Other  Please specify \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do other agencies need to be involved in the future? **Yes/No**

If yes, please specify who and with what aim \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Follow up Action**

Is medical intervention needed? **Yes/No**

Has the school nurse/doctor been informed? **Yes/No**

**Please specify other recording procedures:**

Accident Book  Accident Form  Child Protection Record   
Parent/Carer informed by Telephone  Letter  Direct Contact  Form  
Completed by \_\_\_\_\_

Post Held \_\_\_\_\_

Principal's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**A copy of this completed form should be given to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.**

