

SAFE HANDLING POLICY

FOR

MILLBURN PRIMARY SCHOOL



This policy should be read and understood in conjunction with the school's Discipline Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Protection Policy, Inclusion Policy and Complaints Policy.

This policy has been written in line with EA and DENI guidance.

Rationale

The following policy reflects our dual responsibility to:

- Provide a safe and secure environment for the entire school community inclusive of pupils and staff.
- Promote and sustain appropriate behaviour within this school community.
- Take account of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 12); International 1989 (UK 1991).
- Take account of the Education (NI) Order 1998 (Article 3) and the subsequent updates to this Act (2014) which requires Boards of Governors to ensure that policies are designed to promote good behaviour and discipline.
- Take account of the aforementioned Order (Article 4) and its subsequent updates which clarifies the powers of members of staff of grant-aided schools regarding the use of reasonable force.
- Takes account of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003 (Articles 17 + 19) and subsequent updates, which imposes a duty on Boards of Governors to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils; and
- Take account of the Human Rights Act 1998 which provides the right to education.

This policy and our procedures have been developed in guidance from:

- The Department of Education NI circular 1999/9
- "Towards a Model Policy in Schools on the Use of Reasonable Force." DE 2002
- Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour (2001)
- Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection: Code of Conduct for Staff (1999/10) paragraphs 69-72
- DE circular 2003/13 Welfare and Protection of Pupils

Principles

Millburn Primary School believes that:

- Each child has the right to be educated in a safe and secure environment where their moral, intellectual, personal, social and emotional development is promoted.
- Parents and carers are informed and reassured that their children are being educated in a safe, caring and respectful atmosphere.
- All staff have the right to work in a respectful, safe and secure environment.

These principles underpin our school ethos and culture.

Purposes

The following underpin Millburn 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.
- Develop and implement clear 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.

Links with other policies

This policy is one of the overall Pastoral Care Policies and dovetails into the school's relevant existing Behaviour Policy; Anti-bullying Policy; Child Protection Policy; SEN Policy; Health and Safety Policy; Complaints Procedure, in particular.

Definition of Reasonable Force

The Education (NI) Act 1998 part 11 Article 4(1) and subsequent updates to this order eg Education (NI) Act 2014, states

“A member of staff of a grant maintained school may use, in relation to any pupil in 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 an offence
- Causing personal injury to or damage to the property of any person (including 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 that behaviour occurs during a teaching sessions 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 themselves or others or seriously damaging property, but used in a manner which attempts to preserve the dignity of all concerned.

Practices – Preventative Strategies

The school actively promotes positive behaviour management strategies thus reducing the need for the use of any form of physical intervention, except in emergency situations, as those listed in our working definition.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is a preventative strategy used to minimising the escalation of any incident. Risk assessment will be considered only for those pupils where there is a foreseeable risk and enables the school to plan. Risk assessment will be considered from two perspectives:

- Environmental risk
- Individual risk.

Procedures – Support Structures

The following procedures have been agreed by the staff and adopted by the Board of Governors. Parents and pupils will be informed as part of the overall Pastoral Care Policy.
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, crossing patrol staff.

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 judgement in these decisions and there is a 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. 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 outside of the school premises on authorised activities. Reasonable force should be limited to emergency situations and used only as a last resort when all other appropriate behaviour management strategies have been exhausted and where

- Action is in self-defence or because there is an 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 which is compromising good order and discipline.

Examples (please note this list is not exhaustive) that fall into the above categories are:

- A pupil attacks another pupil or member of staff.
- 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 the corridor or on the stairway in which he/she may cause an accident likely to injure the pupil or others.
- A pupil absconds from class or tries to leave school. (Note this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in school or classroom.) In situations where a child chooses to leave school or the classroom, unauthorised, the reasonable adult in charge will notify the Principal or member of the Senior Leadership Team who will immediately contact the pupil's next of kin.

If a member of staff requires adult assistance a reliable pupil will be deliver a message to the next closest available member of staff.

If an individual pupil is identified as likely to behave in a disruptive/inappropriate way that may require reasonable safe-handling, the Principal/Senior Leadership Team will draw up an individual plan for action and inform relevant staff.

Forms of Reasonable Force

When other behaviour 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 child 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, 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 behaviour.
- Ask the pupil to behave appropriately, clearly stating the desired behaviour.
- Tell the pupil that physical intervention will take place if the 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 authorised adult dealing with the incident feels at risk e.g. from the pupil or larger group of pupils they will send for the nearest available adult, as previously outlined in this policy.

The forms of reasonable force the school will use depend on the individual circumstances and may include:

- Blocking the child's path.
- Separating pupils who are fighting or who are about to fight.
- Holding.
- 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 in more restrictive holds, in extreme circumstances.
- Teaching a child to hold an adult's arm appropriately while walking down the corridor or a staircase or outside on an authorised visit.
- Reacting instinctively to a situation by holding or restraining a child who is running onto or close to a busy road.
- Physically prompting a young child as part of a behaviour management or educational programme.

Health and Safety

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

Limits on the Use of Reasonable 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 catalogue of Pastoral Care Policies. Staff should never act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:

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

The use of reasonable force/safe handling is only to be employed in exceptional circumstances or in an emergency where a pupil appears to be unable to exercise self-control of emotions and whose behaviour is presenting as a threat to himself or others.

Record Keeping

All incidents involving the use of reasonable force/safe handling will be recorded in the school's agreed proforma (RF1). The school Principal will keep an accurate, up-to-date record of all such incidents. Immediately following any incident, the member of staff involved must inform the Principal or member of SLT and provide a written report.

The Chairperson of the Board of Governors and the Principal will annually review the entries in the incident book. Record will be kept until the child's twenty-first birthday. In the event of the young person being over eighteen when they leave school, the record will be retained for a period of three years after they leave school.

Confidentiality and the young person's right to privacy will need to be ensured. The pupil's views/actions should also be recorded as soon as possible afterwards.

Post Incident Management

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

Where it is clear that the teacher/member of staff concerned needs further support, advice or training, the Principal shall take prompt action to try to address these needs.

In the case of an incident resulting in injury, medical assistance will be provided in the first instance by the school's designated first aider.

If support is required for staff and pupils, this will be provided, in the first instance, by the Principal or Vice Principal and, if necessary, Head of Key Stage Co-ordinators. Additional support from EA will be sought as necessary.

Contacting Parents

Parents/carers will be contacted as soon as possible after the incident and the circumstances explained to them. This will also be recorded on the RF1. Any parental complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the school's complaints procedure. Staff who themselves are subject to physical violence or assault should be supported, as appropriate, in taking any necessary action against the assailant.

Last reviewed September 2017

Next Review September 2020