

St. Comgall's Primary School.



A Policy for Guidance on Safe Handling and the use of Reasonable Force to Restrain or control pupils.

Last Reviewed January 2019

“Creating a happy and safe working environment where each child will develop fully through encouragement, example and discipline to become confident independent and responsible young people.”

The need to use reasonable force to restrain or control a pupil will be rare in St Comgall's and will only be used to prevent a pupil from;

- a) committing an offence;
- b) causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself); or
- c) 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

The right of a member of staff to use such force as is reasonable to restrain or control a pupil applies:

- where the member of staff is on the premises of the school; or
- elsewhere at a time when he/she has lawful control or charge of the pupil concerned
- to teachers at the school, **and** to any other member of staff who with the authority of the principal has lawful control or charge of pupils.

Corporal punishment is unlawful and will never be used.

It is our policy to use a variety of strategies to secure pupils' safety and maintain good order and discipline. The guidelines outlined below should be followed.

It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure the policy on “the use of reasonable force/safe handling to restrain or control pupils” is known by teachers and authorised staff eg classroom assistants and supervisors.

Training & Development

It is the responsibility of the Principal to provide training and guidance to all volunteers in the use of preventative strategies and approaches for managing difficult situations when they may arise. All staff will have regular 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.

Unauthorised staff may use reasonable force in an emergency situation e.g. a pupil is at immediate risk of injury.

GUIDELINES

Definition of Reasonable Force

Use of force is when:

- circumstances warrant it i.e. cannot be resolved in any other way
- the degree of force must be in proportion to the seriousness of the situation
- take into account the age, level of understanding, sex and physical disability

The working definition of ‘reasonable force/safe handling’ 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.

Use of force should never be used as a substitute for good behaviour management.

When might it be appropriate to use reasonable force?

In a situation where other behaviour management strategies have failed to resolve the problem, or are inappropriate (e.g. in an emergency), there is a wide variety of circumstances in which reasonable force might be appropriate, or necessary, to restrain or control a pupil. They will fall into three broad categories:

- a) Where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury;
- b) where there is a developing risk of injury; or significant damage to property;
- c) where a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline.

Examples of situations that fall into one of the first two 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 a way in which he/she might have or cause an accident likely to injure him or herself or others;
- a pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave school (**NB this will only apply if a pupil could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school**).

Examples of situations that fall into the third category are:

- a pupil persistently refused to obey an order to leave a classroom;
- a pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson

Practical Considerations

- try all other forms of communication first. Avoid major confrontation

- tell the child you will stop restraining him/her when he/she calms down
- never lose your temper
- never put yourself in danger, ask for help (use of a trusted pupil)

In the case of a known disruptive child, strategies will be planned in advance.

What might be regarded as constituting reasonable force/Safe Handling?

Physical intervention can take a number of forms. It might involve staff:

- physically interposing between pupils;
- blocking a pupil's path;
- holding;
- pushing;
- pulling
- leading a pupil by the arm;
- shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back; or
- (in extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds.

In exceptional circumstances, where there is an immediate risk of injury, a member of staff may need to take any necessary action that is consistent with the concept of "reasonable force", for example, to prevent a young pupil running off a pavement onto a busy road, or to prevent a pupil hitting someone, or throwing something. **However, staff should never act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:**

- holding a pupil round the neck, or by the collar, or in any other way that might restrict the pupil's ability to breathe;
- slapping, punching, kicking or using any implement on a pupil;
- throwing any object at a pupil;
- twisting or forcing limbs against a joint;
- tripping up a pupil;
- holding or pulling a pupil by the hair or ear;
- holding a pupil face down on the ground.

Staff should also avoid touching or holding a pupil in any way that might be considered indecent.

Physical Contact

Although physical contact should generally be avoided, there are occasions when some physical contact may be necessary eg demonstrate exercises or techniques during PE, Music, Technology and Design or first aid (for full details see Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection).

Recording Incidents of Use of Force/Safe Handling

A written report should be kept using the Incident Record Form and should include:

- the name(s) of the pupil(s) involved, and when and where the incident took place;
- the name(s) of any other staff or pupils who witnessed the incident;

- the reason that force was necessary (eg to prevent injury to the pupil, another pupil or a member of staff);
- briefly, how the incident began and progressed, including details of the pupil's behaviour, what was said by each of the parties, the steps taken to defuse or calm the situation, the degree of force used, how that was applied, and for how long;
- the pupil's response, and the outcome of the incident;
- details of any obvious or apparent injury suffered by the pupil, or any other person and of any damage to property;

NB Staff may seek advice from the Principal or Vice Principal when compiling a report.

A copy of the report will be sent to the chairperson of the Board of Governors.

The report should be kept in line with disposal of records procedure as it may be needed for a disciplinary hearing or a criminal prosecution. Parents should be informed immediately and the matter discussed.

This policy must be followed at all times. All complaints from parents etc will be dealt with immediately.

It is the policy that all staff re-visit the safeguarding guidelines annually, in the use of reasonable force to restrain or control pupils.