



Reasonable Force and Safe Handling Policy

2025

Reasonable Force Policy

Schools have a 'duty of care' to their pupils. This may involve all staff having to handle pupils to prevent them harming themselves, others or damaging property.

1. Introduction

This policy has been prepared for the support of all **teaching** and **support** staff who come into contact with pupils and for **volunteers** working within the school. The policy is intended to explain the school's arrangements for physical intervention. Its contents are available to parents and pupils.

The policy has been developed in response to the recommendations and guidance from Circular 99/9 "Pastoral Care: Guidance on the Use of Reasonable Force to Restrain or Contain Pupils."

It also follows the DfES Guidance on the Use of Restrictive Physical Interventions for Staff working with Children and Adults who display Extreme Behaviours in Association with Learning Disability and/or Autistic Spectrum Disorders 2002 and regional policy on the use of reasonable force/safe handling.

The policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies relating to interaction between adults and pupils and in particular the Positive Behaviour Policy.

The person responsible for the implementation of the policy is the Principal. The Principal and the Governing Body will review the policy regularly – paying specific attention to the values and underpinning principles of the policy.

This policy exists within the context of Botanic Primary School having asked for training in Team Teach methods and been refused this training by BELB and latterly EANI. It takes account of Circular 2021/13 Interim Guidance on the Use of Restraint and Seclusion in Educational Settings.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The school believes that good personal and professional relationships between staff and pupils are vital to ensure good order in school. It is recognised that the majority of pupils in our school respond positively to the discipline and control practised by staff. This ensures the safety and well being of all pupils and staff in school. It is also acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances, staff may need to take action in situations where the use of reasonable force may be required.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff in this school

- (i) Clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where reasonable force is necessary and
- (ii) Are provided with appropriate advice to deal with these difficult situations

Staff have a responsibility to follow the policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for physical intervention.

Physical intervention will only be used as a last resort when all other behaviour management strategies have failed or when pupils, staff, good order or property are at risk, but should be reasonable and proportionate.

3. Definitions

a) Physical Contact

Situations in which proper physical contact occurs between staff and pupils.

Below are examples of what staff at Botanic Primary School see as appropriate physical contact.

- The comforting of younger children who are upset or ill through such actions as sitting pupils on knees. In these circumstances a second adult will be present.
- In games or P.E. physical contact may occur
- A hand on the shoulder may be used to guide / reassure / praise
- Whilst on walks children may hold a teacher's hand.

b) Documents

Department of Education document "Towards a Model Policy in Schools on the Use of Reasonable Force" August 2002; Pastoral Care in Schools; Promoting Positive Behaviour (2001); Pastoral Care in Schools -Child Protection: Code of Conduct for Staff (1999/10);Department of Education circular 2003/13 Welfare and Protection of Pupils; Regional Policy Framework on the use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling (2004); Circular 2021/13 Interim Guidance on the Use of Restraint and Seclusion in Educational Settings

c) Physical Intervention

This may be used to divert a pupil from a destructive or disruptive action, for example guiding or leading a pupil by hand, arm or shoulder with little or no force.

d) Restrictive Physical Intervention

This will involve the use of physical intervention/reasonable force when there is an immediate risk to pupils, staff or risk of significant damage to property. All such incidents will be recorded on Sims Behaviour Management by the teacher dealing with the incident. Teachers should adhere to normal good classroom practice but exercise their own professional judgment, taking into account the child's language abilities and possible additional educational or emotional needs.

4. Underpinning Principles

Everyone attending or working in this school has a right to:

- Recognition of their unique identity;
- Be treated with respect and dignity;
- Learn and work in a safe environment;
- Be protected from harm, violence, assault and acts of verbal abuse.

The overarching principle is that the best interests of the child should guide all decisions taken by staff in relation to children in their care (Circular 2021/13)

Pupils attending this school and their parents have a right to:

- Individual consideration of pupil needs by staff who have a responsibility for their care and protection;
- Expect staff to undertake their duties and responsibilities in accordance with the school's policies;
- Be informed about school rules, relevant policies and the expected conduct of all pupils and staff working in school;
- Be informed about the school's complaints procedure.

The school will do all they can to ensure that pupils understand the need for and respond to clearly defined limits, which govern behaviour in the school.

Reasonable force/restraint should

- Only be used as a measure of last resort
- Preserve the dignity and respect of all concerned
- Never be used as a form of punishment or to make a child behave and
- Never deliberately cause pain/injury to a child

Parents have been made aware of the school's Positive Behaviour Policy.

Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005 (SENDO) places duties on educational settings not to directly discriminate against a pupil because of their disability, or to treat disabled pupils less favourably (for a reason relating to their disability) than it treats, or would treat, a pupil to whom that reason does not or would not apply (unless justified) and to make 'reasonable adjustments' to all policies, procedures and practices to ensure that a disabled pupil is not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to those who are not disabled.

A person is regarded as being disabled for the purposes of SENDO if he/she has 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day to day activities'. This is the same definition as that used in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

The school's Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) should keep staff informed about pupils with special educational needs who may require individual support with regard to their physical management. Staff should discuss any concerns they have

about physical management with the SENCO and/or Principal. This should also include engagement with the pupil and their parents/carers.

By reason of their conditions of service, the Principal can authorise all teachers to use restrictive physical intervention. All Classroom Assistants may also be authorised to use restrictive physical intervention.

Authorisation is not given to volunteers or parents.

The Principal is responsible for making clear to whom such authorisation has been given, in what circumstances and settings they may use force and for what duration of time this authorization will last. The Principal will ensure that those authorised are aware of and understand, what the authorisation entails.

Those whom the Principal has not authorised will be told what steps *to* take in case of an incident where physical intervention is needed, for example to contact an authorised member of staff.

Supply staff will not be authorised to use physical intervention as defined in 3(d) unless they are familiar with this school's policy and have been authorised to do so by the Principal.

6. Reasonable Force

The Education (NI) Order 1998 (part II article 4) 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 purposes 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."

7. Staff from the Authority and other Allied Services Working Within the School

Educational support services and Health Service staff working in schools will have their own policies regarding physical intervention. Such staff will, whilst on the school premises, be expected to be aware of and operate within the policy of the school. No outside professional involved in the school staff will be expected or authorised to use restrictive physical intervention unless they have completed the relevant training. The school will ensure that all visiting professionals have access to this and other relevant school policies. Visitors have a responsibility to read these and act accordingly.

8. Training

All staff, including supply staff, will be made aware of this policy and the behaviour management policy. All staff will be provided with training in managing behaviour including how to diffuse potentially difficult situations and how to avoid confrontation without prejudicing good discipline. Such training will include advice about physically intervening with pupils.

BELB and EANI have not provided training in specific measures of restraint or safe handling of pupils, and will not provide such training. Some members of staff may be aware of how to implement these measures through training at other schools but they are not able to provide training to other members of staff.

BELB worked with teaching staff in the course of 2008-2010 in order to develop the school Behaviour Policy, ensure consistency in rules and expectations and raising awareness of strategies for avoiding disruptive or violent behaviour, and thus reduce the need for physical intervention. These principles were adhered to in updating the policy (August 2021) and in the Positive Behaviour Policy (February 2024).

Classroom Assistants and teachers are informed by the SENCO each year of online training courses by EANI's Primary Behaviour Support Service to enhance their skills. This includes reference to the Special Education Provision Mapping each year. All then teaching staff were trained (August 2014) on Guidance on Identifying and Supporting Learners with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.

This was supplemented by training for all staff in changes to the Code of Practice as a result of SENDA 2016 and the SENCO led staff discussion of Provision Mapping (last conducted August 2021) which helps teachers identify training that they may require in order to meet the needs of an to include successfully children with a range of Special Educational Needs, including Social, Behavioural, Emotional and Well-being. Staff

training on the revised Positive Behaviour Policy took place in August 2021 and February 2024.

9. Strategies for Dealing With Challenging Behaviour

Staff working with pupils experiencing a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties, mild learning difficulties and those pupils on the autistic spectrum, are aware that these difficulties may mean that in some instances pupils will not be in control of their behaviour.

The school's Child Protection Coordinator / SENCO/ Principal will ensure that all staff are aware of the needs of individuals who are at risk of exhibiting poor behaviour and strategies to avoid or deal with this. Those pupils can be helped to develop self-control through the use of appropriate behavioural programmes and by staff consistently using positive strategies to encourage acceptable behaviour and good order. All staff should be aware of these programmes and the strategies to be used as determined by risk assessments. Good communication between staff is essential particularly at breaks/lunchtimes where less structured situations can allow behavioural issues to surface.

Staff working as a team will create: -

- a calm, secure atmosphere throughout school and use consistent approaches;
- opportunities for pupils to earn praise/rewards. It is important to praise good behaviour as often as possible especially from a student who often misbehaves. It is especially important to notice and reward behaviour that matches the targets of any individual behaviour plans developed for pupils;
- opportunities to identify problem behaviour or triggers in order to avoid creating further difficulties i.e. by anticipating behaviour before it occurs;
- awareness of pupil behaviour so that attention seeking behaviour is seen but ignored where it is safe to do so;
- opportunities for discussion with the pupil where discussion can take place in order to set targets designed to deal with the difficult or attention seeking behaviour;
- opportunities for explanation of the action/consequences to the pupil;
- as few organisational changes as possible such as the timetable to minimise the potential for pupils to become unsettled;
- potential for staff to be rotated to lessen strain on staff -some members of staff may be able to deal with behaviours that others find upsetting;
- opportunities for regular contact with parents/carers to share plans and spread the strategies over a 24-hour period. Parents/carers must be involved in a behaviour programme which has indicated that restraint may be needed and informed if the physical intervention of their child has taken place.
- Liaise with outside agencies for support and involvement in the programme to ensure that joined up approaches are in place.

Every effort will be made to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to pupils or staff, property, buildings or the environment. Where unacceptable behaviour threatens good order and discipline and requires intervention, some or all of the following approaches should be taken according to the circumstances of the incident:

1. Meet the pupil's needs
2. Range of positive behaviour strategies (rule reminders, positively phrased reprimands)
3. Encourage the pupil to make positive choices and develop self-control
4. Verbal acknowledgement of unacceptable behaviour with a direction to the pupil to refrain.
5. Further verbal reprimand stating:
 - that this is the second request for compliance;
 - an explanation of why observed behaviour is unacceptable;

-an explanation of what will happen if the unacceptable behaviour continues.

6. Warning of intention to intervene physically and that this will cease when the pupil complies. If possible summon assistance

7. Physical intervention -reasonable force using the minimum degree of force necessary to prevent a child harming him or herself, others or property (as stated in 3(b)).

10. Types of Incidents where Physical Intervention may be Required

The incidents described in Circular 99/9 and Department of Education 2002 fall into three broad categories:

- (a) Action due to imminent risk of injury;
- (b) Action due to developing risk of injury or significant damage to property;
- (c) Action where a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline.

Examples of situations, which fall into one of the first two categories, are:

- A pupil attacks a member of staff or another pupil;
- A pupil is engaged in, or is on the verge of committing, deliberate damage or vandalism to property;
- Pupils are fighting;
- A pupil is causing, or is at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by mis-use of dangerous materials or objects;
- A pupil is running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way which he or she might cause an accident or injury to himself, herself or to 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, which fall into the third category, are:

- A pupil persistently refuses to obey an instruction to leave a classroom;
- A pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson.

11. Consequences and Rewards as an Alternative to Physical Intervention

A system of positive rewards and consequences has been developed in the school to encourage appropriate behaviour. These may be found in the Positive Behaviour Policy. Examples of these are:

- Non-verbal acknowledgement
- Praise and encouragement
- Choice of activities (choosing time/golden time)
- Star charts
- Certificates
- Privileges

Further negative consequences may be necessary. The following may be utilised (in no particular order):

- Loss of choice of activities
- Copying from a book
- Writing a letter of apology
- Expectance that the pupil will clear up a mess, repair damage where possible and take responsibility for their actions
- Detention
- Withdrawal
- Catch up work at end of the week
- Home visit
- Exclusion

12. Acceptable Measures of Physical Intervention

The use of any degree of force can only be deemed reasonable if:

- (a) It is warranted by the particular circumstances of the incident;
- (b) It is delivered in accordance with the seriousness of the incident and the consequences which it is intended to prevent;
- (c) It is carried out as the minimum to achieve the desired result;
- (d) The age, level of understanding and gender of the pupil are taken into account;
- (e) It is likely to achieve the desired result.

Wherever possible assistance will be sought from another member of staff before intervening.

Physical intervention - using the minimum degree of force necessary for the shortest period of time - to prevent a pupil harming himself, herself, others or property.

Physical intervention will stop if the child has: -

- Difficulty in breathing
- Vomits
- Has a fit or seizure
- Experiences swelling or change of hue in skin.

Wherever physical intervention is used staff will keep talking to the pupil in a reassuring and positive manner unless risk assessment has indicated that this is likely to inflame the situation.

Children will not be held on the ground.

Unplanned Physical Intervention may trigger a risk assessment that may lead to a ~ Physical Intervention Plan/Positive Handling Plan being developed (see 13 below).

13 Planned Physical Intervention and Risk Assessment

- Planned physical intervention will arise from risk assessments that the school will carry out on some pupils.
- Such assessments will be written. Risk Assessments will be signed by school, parents/guardians and (where appropriate) pupil.
- Planned physical intervention will be agreed in advance (school, parents, other agencies, child).
- Implemented only by named staff.

- Must be a written and signed plan. Those who sign the plan should be those normally present at an Annual Review in the case of Statemented pupils and by parents or guardians and child in other cases.
- Recorded as per unplanned intervention.
- Be part of a holistic care/individual plan.
- Shortest time / minimum force

14 Unacceptable Measures of Physical Intervention

The school is aware of acceptable and unacceptable measures of physical intervention.

Where physical intervention as defined in 3(d) has been used to manage a pupil, a record of the incident will be kept. This record will be made in the school's Incident File (in the SENCO Room), which will include:

- The name of the pupil(s)
- The date, time and place of the incident
- A brief description of the incident and any actions taken.

A member of SLT, normally prior to staff going home, will complete an entry in the Incident File, which is kept in the SENCO Room, as soon as possible after the incident. The Principal will countersign it as soon as possible.

In addition, specific details of the use of planned or unplanned physical intervention will be recorded on a Disruptive Incident Record, which will include:

- How the incident developed;
- Attempts made to calm the situation;
- Names of staff or pupils who witnessed the incident;
- The outcome of the incident including any injuries sustained, by any pupil/staff
- Any damage to property which had resulted
- Whether/how parents have been informed
- (Where possible) pupils view of the incident and whether they wish to make a complaint;
- And, after investigation, a summary of actions taken.

After the review of the incident, copies of the form will be placed on the pupil's file and on the school's general file on the use of physical intervention.

A Health and Safety Accident/Incident Form will be completed when an injury has occurred during physical intervention.

The school will review such records at least every half term to ensure that:

- Records are being appropriately kept
- That patterns of behaviour in individual pupils or at particular times of the day/certain lessons are being identified and problems addressed
- That training issues arising from the above are being identified and addressed.

16 Action after an Incident

See also Section 19

The Principal or Child Protection Officer will ensure that each incident falling into 3(d) above is reviewed and investigated further as required.

In the case of planned intervention a meeting will be held if the school judges this to be necessary. In the case of unplanned intervention a meeting will always be held and will involve parents/guardians, pupil and other relevant professionals. Meetings of this type will be arranged within 5 working days of the physical intervention incident.

If further action is required in relation to a member of staff or pupil, this will be pursued through the appropriate procedure

- Child Protection Procedure (this may involve investigations by other agencies such as Social Services)
- Staff or Pupil Disciplinary Procedure
- School Positive Behaviour Policy
- Exclusions Procedure

The member of staff will be kept informed of any action taken.

In the case of action concerning a member of staff, he/she will be advised to seek advice from his/her professional association/union.

Where staff have been involved in an incident involving physical intervention they should have access to counselling and support. Within the school, this will be made available through the Principal.

17 Complaints

The availability of a clear policy about reasonable force and early involvement of parents should reduce the likelihood of complaints but may not eliminate them.

The Chair of Governors will be informed of complaints.

Any complaints received by the Principal from parents, staff or any other persons regarding alleged ill treatment of pupils or injuries received by a student during the course of physical intervention must be investigated fully by the Principal.

18 Monitoring of Incidents

Whenever a member of staff has occasion to use physical intervention, this will always be recorded and documented. Monitoring of incidents will help ensure that staff are following the correct procedures and will alert the Principal, Governors and Link Adviser to the needs of any pupil whose behaviour can only be contained by the use of physical intervention

19 Support

The school is committed to providing regular professional development on behaviour strategies/management for all staff in order to maintain the ethos of the school, its values and the boundaries of acceptable behaviour.

Staff who have been involved in difficult incidents will be offered the full support of the Principal and SLT in talking through the incident. In this follow up work senior managers and staff will look for "lessons to be learnt" and after procedures or develop training as the result of these insights.

Children who have been subject to physical intervention will be given the opportunity to discuss the incident with a member of staff at the first reasonable opportunity following the incident. Such discussions will offer pupils and school fresh opportunities to work together and to renew relationships that may be strained by the incident. Pupils will be informed of ways in which their behaviour could change in order to prevent a repetition of the incident.

An appropriate member of staff will counsel pupils who have witnessed an incident of physical intervention and who are distressed.

March 2025

Risk Management for Education Staff Based on Above Plus 4-6 Weeks Experience

Risk Behaviour	Behaviour	Trigger Points	Prevention Strategies	Additional Precautions Support/Supervision/ Strategies

Positives to build on:		

Risk of assault: Low / Medium / High

Review date set: _____

To be carried out by: _____

(every three months or just prior to leaving date)

Principal/Vice Principal/Teacher

Daily Risk Management Plan

DO'S (What to say and what to do)	DON'TS (What not to say and what not to do)

Risk Management Assessment

Drawn up by _____

Risk Assessment on: _____

Date: _____

Class Teacher: _____

Background information available:

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Relevant details of previous history:

--

Prescribed medication:

--

Curricular Areas:

--

Other factors:

--

Other Information (eg if a review of existing Risk Assessment, what changes there have been):

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Principal _____

Parent _____