

GILNAHIRK PRIMARY SCHOOL



USE OF REASONABLE FORCE POLICY

March 2025

Introduction

In accordance with the DENI Circular 1999/00 and Regional Policy Framework on the Use of Reasonable Force 2004, Gilnahirk Primary School has established a Pastoral Care Policy towards the pupils in its charge. In addition, it takes reasonable steps to safeguard the welfare of its staff and pupils by promoting good behaviour and discipline on the parts of its pupils.

The Education Order (NI) 1998 enables a member of staff to use reasonable force in the circumstances to prevent a pupil from:

- a) committing an offence
- b) causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of any person or self or
- c) displaying behaviour which is unacceptable to proper school discipline either in or out of class.

The right to use reasonable force to control or restrain a pupil applies:

- a) when a member of staff is on the school premises
- b) elsewhere when in charge of the pupil
- c) to all school staff with the authority of the principal (volunteers would only be expected to alert the member of staff in charge)

Reasonable Force:

Reasonable Force cannot be precisely defined but three areas should be considered before reasonable force is applied:

- i. the **use of force** is only reasonable when prevention of the incident cannot be resolved without force.
- ii. the **degree of force** must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident.
- iii. the use of reasonable force must be in keeping with the physical strength of the pupil as defined by age, sex or disability of the child.

Predicting the Need for Reasonable Force

Initially it is assumed that all good behaviour management strategies have been exercised.

In order that staff may make the correct decision at short notice the school will have considered in advance circumstances when they should and should not use reasonable force.

Need for Reasonable Force

The use of reasonable force can be considered when:

- a) the school's behavioural management strategies have failed, when self-defence is necessary or when there is a risk of injury.
- b) an imminent risk is predicted when significant damage to property is likely.

Examples of the above include: a pupil attacking a member of staff or other pupil, pupils fighting, a pupil causing or at risk, injury or damage by accident, rough play or use of dangerous objects etc, running in an inappropriate situation, a pupil absconding, especially from the school.

- c) where a pupil is compromising good order and discipline.

Examples of the above include: a pupil persistently refuses to obey an instruction, a pupil whose behaviour is seriously disrupting a lesson.

Conduct During the Application of Reasonable Force

The following is good practice but circumstances may arise where immediate intervention is required and the following conduct can not be followed e.g. A child running down the aisle of a bus and about to exit the bus into traffic.

Having considered and applied all possible alternatives members of staff should:

- a) inform the pupil what action he/she will be taking.
- b) continue by word and action to diffuse the situation.
- c) secure the well-being of all other pupils, if necessary, by removing them from the area
- d) send for assistance (using the red triangle system)

Physical Intervention

Physical Intervention could include: (dependent of age and size of pupil)

- Standing between pupils
- Blocking a pupil's pathway
- Holding
- Leading pupil by the arm
- Shepherding pupil by placing hand behind the elbow or
- Lifting
- In extreme cases using more restrictive force

Unacceptable Restraints

Staff should never act in a way that might lead to injury of the pupil. It would be therefore unacceptable to hit, slap, punch, twist limbs, hold inappropriately, or throw an object as means of constraint.

Not all possible situations can be included in any school policy. However, it is understood that all adults will act in good faith in cases of extreme emergency.

Physical Contact

Teachers should use their professional training and judgements to know when physical contact is appropriate such as in PE lessons where coaching techniques or consoling a pupil in distress.

Reporting of the Use of Reasonable Force

- the Principal, Vice Principal or Senior Member of staff should immediately be informed.
- all incidents where Force has been used must be recorded immediately by the Principal.
- parent/guardian of the pupil should be contacted as soon as possible and informed of the incident.

Record of the Use of Reasonable Force

The report on the use of Reasonable Force will contain:

- date of incident
- outline of events preceding incident
- outline of incident including reason for use of reasonable force
- action taken to subdue the incident and to support the staff/pupils involved etc.
- record of any injury/treatment
- names of other involved adults and children
- signatures of reporting members of staff

Under Duty of Care, staff may use physical intervention and when they do, they should be clear that the action was:

- **in the child's best interest**
- necessary
- reasonable and proportionate
- last resort (where possible)