

# Reasonable Force/Safe Handling

## Policy Statement



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

- The Department of Education NI circular 1999/9;
- DE 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) paragraphs 69 to 72; and
- DE Circular 2003/13 Welfare and Protection of Pupils.

**M Houston**

**Principal**

### Additional Notes

**Policy Number:** 2004/9

### History:

- This new policy was created between March 2004 and June 2004 in consultation with Year Coordinators.
- Drafted between June 2004 and September 2004.
- Final version for presentation to Governors written October 2004.
- Presented to and adopted by Governors November 2004.
- Reviewed January 2013
- Reviewed October 2022

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## 1. **Rationale**

### Context

Ulidia Integrated College's responsibility

- ~ Providing 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 (Article 12); International 1989 (UK 1991)
- 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 (Article 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 guidance from:

- The Department of Education NI circular 1999/9;
- DE 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) paragraphs 69 to 72; and
- DE Circular 2003/13 Welfare and Protection of Pupils.

## 2. **Principles**

Ulidia Integrated College believes that:

- Each child has the right to be educated in a safe and secure environment where each child's 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 safe and secure environment.

These principles underpin our school ethos and culture.

## **2.1: Purposes**

The following purposes underpin Ulidia Integrated College'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.

## **2.2: Mission Statement**

*“Educating together Catholics, Protestants and those of other religions or none, in an atmosphere of understanding and tolerance to the highest academic standards”*

## **3. Legislative Framework**

This policy has been formulated with due consideration to the following legislation:

- Children (NI) Order 1995 – duty to protect and child protection responsibilities/fulfilling responsibility;
- UN Convention on The Rights of The Child 1989 – (Articles 12,16 and 19); UK 1991;
- Education (NI) Order 1998 (Part II Article 4(1));
- Human Rights Act 1998 – Articles 3 and 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights;
- Health and Safety at Work Act (NI) Order 1978;
- Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003 – Articles 17, 18, 19.

### **3.1: Links with other Policies**

- This policy is one of the overall pastoral policies and dovetails into the school's existing Behaviour and Relationships Policy, Anti-bullying Policy, Child Protection Policy, Special Needs Policy, health and Safety policy and Complaints Policy
- It also takes account of the Staff Development and Welfare Policy.
- Teaching, learning and assessment Policy and Curricular Policies.

## **4. 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.

#### **4.1: 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.

Preventative strategies for inappropriate behaviour(s) are detailed in our schools behaviour and relationships policy.

#### **4.2: 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 enables the school to plan and train 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)

#### **4.3: 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 of the school's procedures and support structures within the overall **Pastoral Care Policy**.

### **4.4: 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. The principal will confirm with all staff those who are authorised to be in charge of pupils at any given time.

### **4.5: Procedures**

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 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 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 in bus queues, a field trip, 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, or 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 he/she might cause an accident likely to injure himself/herself 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;
- A pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson.

#### **4.6: Forms of Reasonable Force**

**When other behaviour management 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 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 schools 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;
- If the member of staff feels at risk, e.g., from a large or older group of pupils, send for the nearest staff support.

The forms of reasonable force the school will use will depend on the individual circumstances. Some examples are listed below:

- Separating pupils who are fighting, or who are about to fight;
- Blocking a pupil's path;
- Holding;
- Breakaway techniques (e.g., 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).

#### **4.7: Health and Safety**

When using reasonable force/physical intervention/restraint/safe handling, the pupil'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.

## 5. Guidance

### 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;
- Any hold 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;
- 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 emotions and whose behaviour is presenting a threat to himself/herself 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 may endanger his/her life.

### Guidance

Schools need to consider or pay attention to their Code Of Conduct for Staff and the provision of post-incident support for staff.

#### 5.1: Record Keeping

All incidents involving the use of reasonable force must be recorded in the schools agreed pro-forma “**Record/Report of The Use Of Reasonable Force**”. The college 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 or a senior member of staff and provide the contemporaneous written record/report. (Appendix 3 Incident Record Form)

The Chairperson of the Board of Governors and the Principal will review **annually** the entries in the 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 need to be ensured.

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

### **5.2: Contacting Parents**

Parents/carers should be contacted as soon as possible and the incident explained to them. This must also be recorded in the **“Record/Report Of The Use Of Reasonable Force”** as defined in the school policy. Any complaint from a parent will be dealt with within the school's complaints policy/procedures as detailed below.

### **5.3: Complaints**

If an incident occurs in Ulidia Integrated College 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 the Circular 1999/10, Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection.

Staff who themselves are subject to physical violence or assault should be supported, as appropriate, in taking any necessary action against an assailant.

### **5.4: Training and Development**

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. 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.

## **6. Appendix 1:**

### **Risk Assessment**

A small number of pupils may exhibit disturbed or distressing 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:

- Environmental risk assessment; and
- Individual risk assessment.

### **6.1: Environmental Risk Assessment**

- Identifying situations or locations where there is 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 SMT to make recommendations to Board of Governors on type and level of supervision to minimise risk.
- Implement plan.
- Review plan.

## **7. 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.

### **7.1: 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.

## 8. APPENDIX 2: Risk Assessment Proforma



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

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

SUPPORT TO-DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

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

RISK ASSESSMENT COMPLETED BY  
MEMBER OF STAFF: \_\_\_\_\_

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

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_

(Principal)

(Date)

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

Please ✓ as appropriate.

with the pupil	
with other pupils	
with the parent/carer	
with staff	

9. Types of Behaviour causing concern:  
Level of risk, Frequency, People to whom behaviour exhibited



BEHAVIOUR	VERY LIKELY	LIKELY	QUITE POSSIBLE	POSSIBLE	UNLIKELY	FREQUENCY H – Hourly D – Daily W – Weekly M – Monthly T – Termly
DISRUPTION:						
Vandalism						
Fighting						
Violent and Aggressive						
Angry Outbursts						
Impulsive Dangerous Behaviour						
Self Harms						
Medically Related Behaviour						
Threatening and Abusive						
Other ( <i>please specify</i> )						
PEOPLE TO WHOM BEHAVIOUR IS MOST LIKELY EXHIBITED :						
Classroom Teacher						
Subject Teacher ( <i>please specify</i> )						
Classroom Assistant						
Technician						

Ancillary Staff (lunchtime supervisors, caretakers)						
Member of SMT						
Male Staff						
Female Staff						
Other Pupils in Class						
Other Pupils in School						
Male Pupils						
Female Pupils						
Younger/Older Pupils						
Ethnic Minority Pupils						

10. Environments & Times of Greatest Risk – Flash Points/Hot Spots



LOCATION AND TIME OF BEHAVIOURS	DISRUPTION	VANDALISM	BULLYING	FIGHTING	VIOLENT AND AGGRESSIVE	ANGRY OUTBURSTS	IMPULSIVE DANGEROUS	SELF HARM	MEDICALLY DELAYED	THREATENING AND ABUSIVE	OTHER (please specify)
Behaviour During Lessons											
Behaviour in Practical Lessons (please specify)											
Behaviour Going Between Lessons											
Behaviour in Library											
Behaviour in Canteen/Lunch											
Behaviour at Break Times											
Behaviour in Playground/Lunchtime											
Behaviour on Educational Trips											
Behaviour Off-Site Disapplied Programmes											

Behaviour in PE/Games Hall											
Behaviour on School/Public Transport Bus											
Behaviour in Taxi											
Behaviour if Medication Not Taken											
Other Behaviours – <i>(please specify)</i>											





## 11. Risk Evaluation

Level of Likelihood	x	Frequency	=	Risk
Very Likely 5	x	Hourly (5)	=	25 greatest
Likely 4	x	Daily (4)	=	16
Quite Possible 3	x	Weekly (3)	=	9
Possible 2	x	Monthly (2)	=	4
Unlikely 1	x	Termly (1)	=	1 lowest

Likelihoods		Frequency	
Very likely	5	Hourly	5
Likely	4	Daily	4
Quite Possible	3	Weekly	3
Possible	2	Monthly	2
Unlikely	1	Termly	1

This numerical evaluation of risk is not an absolute but simply affords a pupil's predisposition and risk frequency to be compared.

### RISK FACTORS

Score	Risk
25	Very High
15-20	High
8-12	Medium
6-10	Low
1-5	V Low





**12. Risk Evaluation Proforma**

Drawn up by _____ _____	Date _____
Name of Pupil _____	
Agreed by _____ (Principal)	Date _____
Presented to BOG _____ (Date)	
To be reviewed _____ (Date)	
Signed _____ (Parent)	Date _____

Behaviour	Risk Factor	Existing Precautions/ Support/Supervision Linked to Education Plan	Additional Precautions/Support/ Supervision/Strategies	Action By Whom	Action By When
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13. APPENDIX 3: INCIDENT RECORD FORM



**Incident Record Form**

**Basic Data** Date of Incident \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Pupil: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Year Group

Employing Authority:     ELB                       CCMS                       Voluntary Grammar  
    NICIE                       Irish Medium

Staff involved in restraint: \_\_\_\_\_ Designation:  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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? Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Time:  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

What action did you take to try to de-escalate the situation before using restraint?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Compromising 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?

---

How was the pupil held?

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How long did the pupil need to be held?

---

Was anybody injured? **YES/NO** If yes, please give details

---

---

Name of member of staff who verbally checked pupil for injury after the hold

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Has the pupil been physically restrained before? **YES/NO**

### **Implications for Future Planning**

Does this pupil have an individual behaviour programme/education plan?  
**YES/NO**

Do changes need to be made to any of the following? (*please tick appropriate box*)

The environment eg 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

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### **Follow Up Action**

Medical intervention was needed **YES/NO**

Has 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

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Principal's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date

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***A copy should be sent to the chairperson of the Board of Governors***