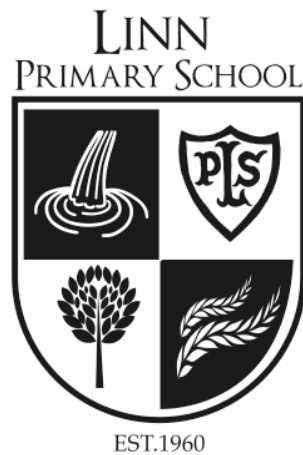


# Linn Primary School and Nursery Unit



## Reasonable Force & Safe Handling Policy

May 2021

## LINN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY UNIT

### Reasonable Force/Safe Handling Policy

#### Policy Statement:

In relation to the Pastoral Care Policy of Linn Primary School, the Board of Governors, the Principal and school staff will:

1. Seek to promote and secure good behaviour and discipline on the part of the pupils.
2. Take all reasonable steps to ensure that the welfare of pupils is safeguarded and that their safety is preserved.

The Board of Governors and the Principal strongly advocate that:

1. Staff should always try to deal with any situation through other strategies before using reasonable force.
2. Any force used should always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result.
3. The application of reasonable force to restrain or control a pupil is used *only* as a last resort if the circumstances of the particular incident warrant it.

#### Policy Aims:

1. To give clear guidance on the use of reasonable force.
2. To clarify who may use reasonable force in Linn Primary School.
3. To explain when and where reasonable force may be used.
4. To define what constitutes reasonable force.
5. To specify the procedures for reporting and recording incidents necessitating the use of reasonable force.

#### 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.

### **Preventative Strategies:**

Linn Primary 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 school's positive behaviour policy.

### **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. 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 (please refer to Regional Policy framework).

### **WHO may use Reasonable Force/Safe Handling:**

- Teachers
- Non-teaching staff (including classroom assistants, clerical staff, lunchtime supervisors, caretaker, crossing patrol personnel, escorts, education welfare officers and psychologists - provided they have been authorised by the Principal to have lawful control or charge of pupils).

Volunteers, including parents who have been suitably vetted, should alert the member of staff in charge and defer to his/her judgement as to the appropriate means of handling the situation (in exceptional circumstances the volunteer may need to be authorised by the Principal).

### **WHEN Reasonable Force may be used:**

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 should be limited to emergency situations and used only as a last resort when all other behaviour management strategies have been exhausted and:

- a) Where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury.
- b) To prevent a pupil causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil him/herself), e.g.
  - An attack on a member of staff or another pupil
  - Pupils fighting
  - A pupil causing, or at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous substances or objects
  - A pupil 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/herself or others
  - A pupil absconding from class or trying to leave school
- c) Where a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising to good order and discipline, whether during a teaching session or otherwise, e.g.
  - 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

### **WHERE Reasonable Force may be used:**

- a) On the school premises
- b) Elsewhere (when authorisation has been given to have lawful control or charge of the pupil concerned, e.g. educational visits, sporting events)

### **WHAT might be regarded as Reasonable Force:**

When other behaviour management strategies have failed - it should be the minimum intervention of 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 teacher, classroom assistant or supervisory assistant 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 and are:

- a) Separating pupils who are fighting, or who are about to fight
- b) Blocking a pupil's path
- c) Holding
- d) Breakaway techniques (eg when a member of staff is grabbed by a pupil)
- f) Leading a pupil by the arm
- g) Shepherding a pupil away by placing hands on the backs of elbows
- h) (In extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds

### **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.

### **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.

### **Procedures for Reporting and Recording incidents involving the use of Reasonable Force:**

1. Immediately following any incident the member of staff concerned must inform the Principal or the designated teacher (Mr. Ritchie).
2. From the Principal's Office, obtain and complete an Incident Record Form (see Appendix 1).
3. Parents/carers should be contacted as soon as possible and the incident explained to them. This must also be recorded in the Incident Record Form.
4. Return the Incident Record Form to the Principal's Office. The Principal will keep an accurate up-to-date record of all such incidents. Records of incidents will be kept in the locked Child Protection cabinet in the Principal's office. Confidentiality and the young person's right to privacy will need to be ensured.

**Complaints:**

If an incident occurs in Linn Primary School or Nursery Unit 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 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.

The following procedures have been agreed by the staff and adopted by the Board of Governors.

Copies of this policy are available for all teaching and non-teaching staff and members of the Board of Governors.

**Appendix 1**

**INCIDENT REPORT**

**Linn Primary School and Nursery Unit**

**Pastoral Care: Reasonable Force to Restrain or Control Pupils**

1. Name(s) of pupil(s) involved .....
  2. Date incident took place .....
  3. Where incident took place .....
  4. Names of all staff or pupils who witnessed the incident .....
  5. The reason that force was necessary (*e.g. to prevent injury to the pupil, another pupil or a member of staff*) .....
  6. Brief description of the incident
    - (a) how the incident began .....
    - (b) how the incident progressed .....
    - (c) details of the pupil's behaviour .....
    - (d) what was said by each of the parties .....
    - (e) steps taken to defuse or calm the situation.....
    - (f) the degree of force used .....
    - (g) how the force was applied .....
    - (h) how long the force was applied .....
  7. The pupil's response to the incident .....
  8. The outcome of the incident .....
  9. Details of any obvious or apparent injury
    - (a) suffered by the pupil .....
    - (b) suffered by any other person .....
  10. Details of any damage to property .....
  11. Principal informed Yes / No (*signed*) ..... Date .....
  12. Designated teacher(s) informed
    - Mrs Duff Yes / No (*signed*) ..... Date .....
    - Mr Ritchie Yes / No (*signed*) ..... Date .....
  13. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) informed and incident discussed Yes / No  
Comments .....
- 
- Member of staff (*signature*) .....
- Date .....
- 

**PLEASE RETURN TO OFFICE WHEN COMPLETED**



