# **Rosstulla School**

**‘Together Towards Tomorrow’**



# **Reasonable Force and Safe Handling Policy**

**Agreed by Governing Body September 2021**

**Chairperson’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Context of school**

Rosstulla School caters for pupils with severe and moderate learning difficulties and other complex needs whose ages range from 3 to 17 years.

AIMS OFTHIS POLICY

To create a learning environment in which young people and adults feel safe.

To protect every person in the school community from harm.

To protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention, which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful.

To put in place guidance for staff so that they are clear about the circumstances in which they might use reasonable force to restrain pupils and how such reasonable force might be applied.

**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 school’s positive behaviour management policy especially – defusing and de-escalating conflict/confrontation or aggression.

**Reasonable Force**

Reasonable force is the minimum force necessary to prevent a pupil from physically harming him/herself or others or seriously damaging property.

Reasonable force and safe handling should only be used if de-escalation techniques have failed to resolve the situation.

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 pupil.

We adhere to the **Education NI Order (1998). Article 4** of the Order states that a member of staff may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances of preventing the pupil from doing (or continuing to do) any of the following:

1. Committing an offence
2. Causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of any person (including the person himself);
3. 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.

All instances of the use of reasonable force/restraint should be recorded, parents/carers should be informed and follow up support provided to the pupil and staff involved.

**Staff should not place themselves at risk merely to protect property.**

The use of reasonable force will depend on the circumstances and staff should take the following into consideration:

* Is it necessary (in the best interest of the pupil), reasonable and proportionate
* The age, sex, physical strength, understanding and special educational needs of the pupil
* Physical force or restraint is not to be used as routine part of behavioural management. It should be in proportion to the circumstances of the behaviour or the circumstances that it is intended to prevent

**The following may be regarded as constituting reasonable force:**

* Physically interposing between pupils
* Blocking a pupil’s path
* Holding
* Guiding away from a situation using ‘Caring Cs’
* Shepherding a pupil by placing a hand in the centre of the back
* In extreme circumstances using a safe handing/Team Teach hold (see below)

**NB** If a hold has to be used extreme care should be exercised. It should be held for the minimum time required and eased as the young person calms. Staff should always advise the young person of the behaviours expected in order for the hold to be released.

**Circumstances under which reasonable force may be deemed acceptable:**

* Pupils fighting
* A pupil involved in rough play or misusing dangerous materials, substances or objects in a manner that may cause injury to him/herself or others
* A pupil who is physically abusing staff or other pupils or causing significant damage to property that may lead to the pupil injuring themselves.

**Team Teach**

The majority of permanent staff are Team Teach trained. Training is updated annually. Any new permanent staff in the school will have the full training as soon as it becomes available after their start date.

Any injury which results from a physical intervention should not automatically be regarded as evidence of malpractice on the part of the staff member as long as the criteria for intervention was followed.

COVID 19 additional notes

During the current Coronavirus pandemic, staff will be wearing PPE as appropriate and maintaining social distance from pupils where possible, as advised by the Education Authority.

It should also be noted that there have been a high number of new staff employed in the school and no Team teach training offered therefore there are a number of untrained staff in the school.

All staff whether trained or untrained have a duty of care to physically intervene where a pupil is a risk of harm to themselves or others.

**Absconding**

It is reasonable to prevent a pupil from absconding on the basis that he/she may be injured, become involved in inappropriate behaviours or that the act is prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline in the school.

**Guidelines for dealing with a pupil who has absconded**

1. Inform the Principal or Vice Principal immediately
2. Every effort will be made to persuade the individual to return to a place of safety.
3. If necessary, the principal or Vice Principal will inform:

The PSNI

The parent or carer of the pupil

1. Monitor the situation, in particular the whereabouts of the pupil.

Staff should not confront a pupil in a heightened state of anxiety as you may cause them to run into the road or travel further than they would have done. Remain calm and reassuring.

A pupil is the school’s responsibility even though they may have left the building or grounds.

**Risk Assessment**

Risk assessment is one of our preventative strategies to minimise the risk of anincident escalating unnecessarily and will be a normal practice for our school when a pupil is known to exhibit 'risky’ behaviour. Risk assessment will be considered 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) individual risk management plan (for reduction of Risk within a normal school day.

(b) environmental risk assessment (for assessing risk of pupils engaging in particular activities or going on school outings)

**Positive Handling Plan**

Circular 1999/9 identifies that restraint (safe handling) should not be used as a form of discipline. If a pupil has had to be safe handled, then a positive handling plan will be drawn up.

A positive handling plan informs all concerned how a pupil will be safely handled when in crisis. It will be drawn up, shared and agreed with the pupil, his/her parent/carers and relevant staff. (APPENDIX 1)

Whilst the agreement of the pupil or his/her parent/carer is preferable, failure to agree to the plan does not mean that positive handling will not be used when the pupil is in crisis. The best interests of the child are paramount, and staff have a duty of care for other pupils and staff at risk of harm.

**Seclusion**

Current guidance does not seek to define seclusion or indicate what forms of seclusion, if any, are permissible, and in what circumstances. The issue of seclusion, including Deprivation of Liberty, is being considered as part of the Department’s review and, subject to Ministerial approval, guidance will follow once that process has been completed.

Children should never be locked in a room or left unaccompanied and must be able to leave when they want to.

**Record Keeping**

All incidents of positive handling should be fully documented and recorded in the bound and numbered book in the Principals office. The record will be shared with the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

The Vice-Principal and the Principal should be informed of the incident.

Parents/Carers should be informed if safe handling beyond that agreed in the student’s positive handling plan has been used.

**Complaints**

A subsequent complaint against a member of staff by or on behalf of a pupil will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures outlined in the school policy on child protection. And in line with our Raising a Concern and Complaints Policies.

If a member of staff is subject to physical violence or assault and wishes to pursue a complaint against his/her assailant through PSNI they are free to do so.

**Related Documents:**

1.Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998

2. DE Circular 1999/09

3. Towards a Model Policy in schools on the use of reasonable force

5. Policy Framework on the use of reasonable force/safe handling

6.Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour DE Circular 1999/09

The Department of Education have recently published Circular Number:

2021/13 Interim Guidance on the Use of Restraint and Seclusion in Educational Settings while they undertake a review. This policy will be updated in line with this when published.

Appendix 1

**Positive Handling Plan**

**Name:**

**DOB: Date:**

**SCHOOL: Rosstulla School**

***Likelihood of Physical Intervention Required:***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **High Risk** | **Medium Risk** | **Low Risk** | **None** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Triggers/Situations likely to result in Physical Intervention:**  **When does it occur?**  **Where does it occur?**  **What is the behaviour like/ what is most likely to happen?** |

***Strategies to be used (where possible) before Physical Intervention:***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Give Time**  **(when safe)** | **Distraction**  In some situations | **State**  **Alternatives/**  **Consequences** | **Praise partial**  **Compliance** |
| **Give Space**  **(when safe)** | **Reassure/**  **Remind** | **Other staff**  **intervene** | **Repeat**  **request** |
| **Talk calmly** | **Give a**  **count** | **Instruct**  **Other pupils** | **Remove**  **Stimlus** |
| **Firm clear instructions** | **Planned**  **Ignoring** | **Negiotation** | **Humour** |
| **Contingent**  **touch** |  |  |  |

**Other: (describe any interests, words etc, which may divert attention from an escalating crisis)**

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**Prevention: (describe any strategies that should be avoided)**

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**Preferred Handling Strategies to be used:**

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| --- |
| Help Hug  xxx\*  Cradle Hug  Standing Wrap  Sitting Wrap - **be aware he may kick/spit/lash out**. √  Standing Double Elbow  Half Shield  Sitting Double Elbow (Single person  Standing Single Elbow (Two person)  Sitting Single Elbow (Two person)  Figure of Four (Two person)  Advanced Front Ground Recovery (Three person)  Elbow Guide  Clothing Response (detail: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)  Biting Response (detail: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)  Hair Response (detail: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)  Response to deliberate dead weight  Fight separation (detail: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)  Other: If in danger (ie climbing) hold legs and talk calmly  Remove shoes. |
|  |

**Debrief process required after Physical Intervention e.g. Space, talk through etc:**

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**Recording and reporting if required:**

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| Accident Book  √  Serious Incident Form  Contact parent/ guardian  Contact social worker  Bound Book  PSNI  Other |

**Signatures:**

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| --- |
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**Child** (where appropriate)**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Parent Guardian:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**School representative:**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_**