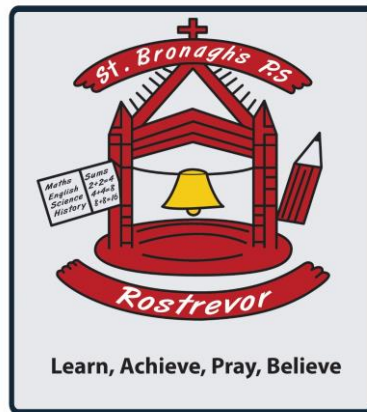


# St Bronagh's Primary School

## Policy on the use of Reasonable Force and Safe Handling



Date approved by Board of Governors: Spring 2026  
Review Date: Spring 2029

## **Principles**

St Bronagh's Primary School 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.

## **Purposes**

The following purposes underpin St Bronagh's use of Reasonable Force and Safe Handling 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.

## **Mission Statement**

We in St Bronagh's Primary School have a responsibility for the Pastoral Care, general welfare and safety of the children in our care and we will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive and safe environment, where each child is valued for his or her unique talents and abilities, and in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. All staff, teaching and non-teaching should be alert to the signs of possible abuse and should know the procedures to be followed.

## **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.

## **Links with Other Policies**

This policy is one of the overall pastoral policies and dovetails into the school's existing positive behaviour policy, anti-bullying policy, child protection policy, special needs policy, misuse of substances/drugs education policy, first aid and the administration of medicines policy, relationships and sexuality in education policy, eSafety policy, intimate care policy, health and safety policy and complaints policy, teaching and learning policy, staff code of conduct and curricular policies.

## 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);**
- **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.

## Practices

### Preventative Strategies

St Bronagh’s 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 behaviour management policy especially – defusing and de-escalating conflict/confrontation or aggression.

### 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 (Appendices 1 & 2).** 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.

## 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.

## **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, e.g. teachers, classroom assistants, supervisory assistants. The principal will confirm with all staff those who are authorised to be in charge of pupils at any given time.

### **Insurance**

Staff who follow the procedures in this policy, and are acting within the course of their employment and in such circumstances where they have acted in good faith will receive the full support of his/her employer/employing authority and will not be legally or financially liable should any consequential action be brought against him or her.

### **Procedures**

We understand that 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 e.g. 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 an area in which she/he might cause an accident likely to injure her/himself 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.

### **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 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 that our members of staff may use will depend on the individual circumstances and are:**

- separating pupils who are fighting, or who are about to fight;
- blocking a pupil's path;
- holding;
- leading a pupil by the arm;
- shepherding a pupil away by placing hands on the backs of elbows;
- using more restrictive holds (in extreme circumstances).

### **Forms of Safe Handling**

**The forms of safe handling that our members of staff may use will depend on the individual circumstances and are:**

- teaching a child to hold an adults arm appropriately whilst walking down a corridor or a staircase; or on a visit outside school;
- reacting instinctively to a situation by holding or restraining a child who is running onto a busy road or into a place of danger;
- physically prompting a young child as part of an educational or behaviour programme;
- assisting a child with toileting.

## 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 Safeguarding and 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.

## Record Keeping

All incidents involving the use of reasonable force must be recorded in our pro-forma "**Record/Report of The Use of Reasonable Force**". The Principal 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 2 Incident Record Form.

The use of physical intervention can be upsetting to all concerned, therefore, it is important to ensure that staff and pupils are given emotional support and where required basic first-aid treatment. Immediate action should be taken to ensure that medical help is accessed for any injuries that require more than basic first-aid. All injuries should be reported and recorded in accordance with the school's procedures – parents/carers must be informed and allowed an opportunity to discuss.

Where it is clear that the teacher/member of staff concerned needs further support, advice or training, the Principal should take prompt action to ensure it is provided.

### **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.

### **Complaints**

If an incident occurs in St Bronagh's Primary School involving the use of reasonable force/restraint by a member of staff, 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.

### **Training and Development**

The Principal has responsibility for providing guidance to staff on the use of reasonable force/safe handling and for implementing and supporting the school's procedures.

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.

### **Policy Development and Guidance**

#### Consultation

The following people will be consulted about this policy:

- children and young people;
- parents and carers;
- all members of staff
- Board of Governors.

## **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;
- individual risk assessment.

### **Environmental Risk Assessment**

- Identify 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 Class Teacher to make recommendations to Board of Governors on type and level of supervision to minimise risk.
- Implement plan.
- Review plan.

### **Individual Risk Assessment**

Where a member of staff/class teacher thinks it is likely that a pupil will 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;

### **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.

**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 tick ✓ as appropriate.

<b>With the pupil</b>	
<b>With other pupils</b>	
<b>With the Parent/Guardian</b>	
<b>With other staff</b>	

**Types of behaviour causing concern: Level of risk, frequency, people to whom behaviour exhibited**

<b>Behaviour</b>	<b>Very likely</b>	<b>Likely</b>	<b>Quite Possible</b>	<b>Possible</b>	<b>Unlikely</b>	<b>Frequency H-hourly D-daily W-weekly M-monthly T-termly</b>
<b>Disruption</b>						
<b>Vandalism</b>						
<b>Bullying</b>						
<b>Fighting</b>						
<b>Violent and aggressive</b>						
<b>Angry outbursts</b>						
<b>Impulsive dangerous behaviour</b>						
<b>Self-harm</b>						
<b>Medically related behaviour</b>						
<b>Threatening and abusive</b>						
<b>Other (please specify)</b>						
<b>People to whom behaviour is most likely exhibited</b>						
<b>Class teacher</b>						
<b>Classroom assistant</b>						
<b>Ancillary staff (lunchtime supervisors, caretaker)</b>						
<b>Member of SMT</b>						
<b>Male staff</b>						
<b>Female staff</b>						
<b>Other pupils in class</b>						
<b>Other pupils in school</b>						
<b>Male pupils</b>						
<b>Female pupils</b>						
<b>Younger/Older pupils</b>						
<b>Ethnic minority pupils</b>						

<b>Environments and times of greatest risk – Flash points/Hot spots</b>	Very likely	Likely	Quite Possible	Possible	Unlikely	Frequency H-hourly D-daily W-weekly M-monthly T-termly

### Risk Evaluation

<u>Level of Likelihood</u>	x	<u>Frequency</u>	=	<u>Risk</u>
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

<u>Likelihoods</u>		<u>Frequency</u>	
Very likely 5		Hourly	5
Likely 4	4	Daily	4
Quite Possible 3	3	Weekly	3
Possible 2	2	Monthly	2
Unlikely 1	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**

<b>Score</b>	<b>Risk</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>Very high</b>
<b>16-20</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>11-15</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>6-10</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>1-5</b>	<b>Very low</b>

**Appendix 3 Incident Record Form**

**Date of Incident** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pupil's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Class:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Staff Involved in use of restraint:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Role** \_\_\_\_\_

**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?

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

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

What action was taken 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? \_\_\_\_\_

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Was anybody injured? Yes/No

If yes, please give details \_\_\_\_\_

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

---

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 e.g. organisation, curriculum  Targets for teaching new skills

Reinforcement strategies  Defusing and calming strategies

Other  Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

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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** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**A copy will be given to the chairperson of the Board of Governors.**