

# Lurgan Junior High School

## The Use of Reasonable Force Policy

## School Leadership Team

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### Rationale:

At Lurgan Junior High School, as part of our Pastoral responsibility towards those in our care, we strive to ensure that the welfare of our pupils is safeguarded and that good behaviour and discipline are promoted and that we have a safe and secure environment for the entire school community (pupils and staff).

This policy outlines the rare situations in which Reasonable Force may be used by a member of staff to restrain or control a pupil when all other behaviour management strategies have failed and should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct and Positive Behaviour Policy, School Rules, Anti-Bullying Policy, Cyber Safety Policy and Use of Mobile Phone Policy.

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;
- Regional Policy Framework on the Use of Reasonable Force and Safe Handling May 2004;
- 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.

### Definition

Reasonable Force is the minimum force necessary to prevent a pupil from physically harming him/herself or others or seriously damaging property. It must be used in a manner which attempts to preserve the dignity of all concerned.

## **Aims:**

1. To create a learning environment in which all pupils and adults feel safe.
2. To protect the entire school community from harm.
3. To protect all pupils against any form of physical intervention which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful.
4. To provide guidance for staff so they are aware of:
  - a) circumstances in which reasonable force to restrain pupils may be used;
  - b) how reasonable force might be applied.

## **Guidelines for Staff:**

Staff are advised, whilst taking due account of their duty of care to pupils, to try to deal with a situation through other strategies before using Reasonable Force.

1. It is generally better to defuse a situation than to intervene.
2. Force used to restrain or control a pupil should always be the absolute minimum needed.
3. It may be used in the following circumstances:
  - a) when a pupil physically attacks another pupil or a member of staff;
  - b) when a pupil is actively engaged in causing deliberate damage or vandalism to school property;
  - c) when a pupil is causing or is at risk of causing injury or damage accidentally or by use of dangerous objects or materials (science lab/playing fields).
4. The most likely scenarios in which 'Reasonable Force' may be used are:
  - a) when intervening in a 'fight' situation;
  - b) an attack on a pupil or staff member;
  - c) a pupil is causing or is at risk of causing injury or damage to himself or others;
  - d) a pupil absconds from class/school and could be classified as 'at risk' (NB The school may call the PSNI and inform parents if this occurs).

In such incidents the following guidelines are provided:

- a) Assess the situation.
- b) Remain calm.

- c) Disperse onlookers.
- d) **Never put yourself at risk**; enlist the help of a colleague if possible. Staff, if possible, are advised to contact a member of the School Leadership Team to come to the incident immediately.
- e) **Use verbal intervention initially**, shout, whistle etc.
- f) Only intervene using Reasonable Force when all other strategies have failed by:
  - physically imposing oneself between pupils;
  - blocking a pupil's path;
  - holding a pupil (never around neck);
  - holding pupil's arm to prevent them striking you or property;
  - leading a pupil by the arm;
  - directing a pupil away by placing a flat, open hand in the centre of the back;
  - constantly, calmly and firmly request the pupil to come to quietness and stillness;
  - only in extreme cases i.e. self defence, are you advised to use a more restrictive hold.

5. Staff are advised to act in a way to ensure the pupil is protected from injury/pain e.g.:

- a) Never hold pupil around the neck or collar.
- b) Do not restrict pupil's breathing.
- c) Never slap, punch or kick.
- d) Do not twist or force limbs.
- e) Do not pull or drag pupil by any part of the body.
- f) Do not hold face down on the ground.
- g) Do not touch a pupil in any way that could be interpreted as indecent.

6. When an incident of 'Reasonable Force' is used, the member of staff involved is requested to record, in writing, the following details (see Appendix attached):

- a) The names of ALL involved including WITNESSES.
- b) The time, date and place of the incident.
- c) Incident forms providing details of how it began and progressed.
- d) Steps taken to defuse the situation.
- e) Degree/type of force used.
- f) The outcome.
- g) Any injuries to pupils/staff or damage to property.

Please submit this report immediately to Principal/Vice Principals in order that disciplinary action in regard to pupil/s can be put in place.

The school will work with SENCO when risk assessment is necessary

and in the best interest of pupil and school.

Parents of pupils involved should be informed as quickly as possible (orally and in writing).

Also the school will follow up the incident with the pupil ensuring he/she understands why force was needed.

**Evaluation:**

To be reviewed annually or in the event of change in legislation.

## Appendix

### RECORD OF THE USE OF REASONABLE FORCE

Date of incident:

Time of Incident:

Pupil Name:

Date of Birth:

Member(s) of staff involved:

Adult witness(es) to incident:

Pupil witness(es) to incident:

Outline of event leading to incident, including place where incident occurred, description of pupil's behaviour and steps taken to defuse the situation other than physical intervention:

Outline of incident including reason for use of reasonable force, how it was applied and for how long:

Measures taken following the incident (eg respite for pupil(s), support for teacher(s)):

Description of any injury(ies) sustained by anyone, any subsequent treatment and any damage to property:

Date parent/carer informed of incident:

Time:

By whom informed:

Outline of parent/carer response:

Signature of Staff completing report:

Date:

Signature of Teacher-in-charge:

Date:

Signature of Principal:

Date;

Brief description of any subsequent inquiry/complaint or action:



**LURGAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**  
**INCIDENT RECORD FORM**

**Basic Data**

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

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_ Year Group \_\_\_\_\_

Employing Authority      EA                  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?

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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?

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How was the pupil held? \_\_\_\_\_

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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 \_\_\_\_\_

**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

Parent/carer informed by Telephone  Letter  Direct Contact

Form completed by \_\_\_\_\_

Post held \_\_\_\_\_

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

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