

# St Colman's Primary School

## Safe Handling Policy



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Ratified by Board of Governors:

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Signatures:

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## Introduction

Schools have a duty of care to their pupils. This may involve all staff who come into contact with pupils and volunteers working within the school. The policy is intended to explain the school's arrangements for physical intervention. Its contents are available to parents and pupils.

The policy has been developed in response to the recommendations and guidance from DE Circular 99/09 "*Pastoral Care: Guidance on the Use of Reasonable Force to Restrain or contain pupils.*"

This Policy also acknowledges the DENI Circular 2017/04, "*Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools- A Guide for Schools*"

This Policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies relating to interaction between adults and pupils. Of particular importance and relevance is our Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy.

### ***Purpose of the Policy***

We, in St Colman's PS, believe that good personal and professional relationships between staff and pupils are vital to ensure good order in school. It is recognised that the majority of pupils in our school respond positively to the maintaining of good order procedures practised in St. Colman's. This ensures the safety and well-being of all pupils and staff in school.

It is also acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances, staff may need to take actions in situations where the use of reasonable force may be required.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff in school:

- clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where reasonable force is necessary and
- are provided with appropriate advice to deal with difficult situations

Staff have a responsibility to follow the policy and to seek alternative strategies wherever possible in order to prevent the need for physical intervention.

Physical intervention will only be used as a last resort when all other behaviour management strategies have failed or when a pupil, staff member or property are at immediate risk. Response in this regard should be reasonable and proportionate.

### ***Principles***

Everyone attending or working in St Colman's PS has a right to:

- Recognition of their unique identity
- Be treated with respect and dignity
- Learn and work in a safe environment
- Be protected from harm, violence, assault and acts of verbal abuse

Pupils attending St Colman's PS and their parents have a right to:

- Individual consideration of pupil needs by staff who have a responsibility for their care and protection
- Expect staff to undertake their duties and responsibilities in accordance with the school's policies
- Be informed about school rules, relevant policies and the expected conduct of all pupils and staff working in school
- Be informed about the school's Complaints Procedure

We in school will do all that we can to ensure that our pupils understand the need for, and respond to clearly defined limits which govern behaviour in school.

Parents should be aware of the school's Positive Behaviour Policy and are committed to ensuring their child adheres to it.

### ***Staff Authorised to Use Physical Intervention***

The Principal can authorise all staff to use restrictive physical intervention.

Authorisation is not given to volunteers, students or parents.

The Principal is responsible for making clear to those to whom such authorisation has been given, the circumstances and settings in which they may use force and for what duration of time this authorisation will last. The Principal will ensure that those so authorised are aware of and understand this the authorisation entails.

Those whom the Principal has not authorised will be told what steps to follow in the case of an incident where physical intervention is needed, for example to contact an authorised member of staff.

Substitute teachers will not be authorised to use physical intervention unless they are familiar with the school's policy, have undertaken training and have been authorised to do so by the Principal.

### ***Reasonable Force***

The Education (NI) Order 1998 states:

“A member of staff may use, in relation to any pupil at the school, such force as is reasonable in the circumstances for the purposes 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”

### ***Staff from External Support Services***

Staff from these services working in school will have their own policies regarding physical intervention. Such staff will, whilst on school premises be expected to be aware of and operate within the policy of the school. No outside professional involved will be expected or authorised to use restrictive physical intervention unless they have completed relevant training. The school will ensure that all visiting professionals have access to our Safe Handling Policy and other relevant policies. Support Services have a duty to read these and act accordingly.

## ***Training***

All staff will be made aware of this policy and the Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy. Training will be provided in managing behaviour, including how to diffuse potentially difficult situations and how to avoid confrontation without prejudicing good discipline and order.

Such training will include advice, guidance and good practice about physically intervening with pupils.

## ***Preventative and pro-active strategies to deal with challenging behaviour***

Staff working with pupils experiencing a range of Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, and those pupils on the Autistic Spectrum, are aware that these difficulties may mean that in some instances pupils will not be in control of their behaviour.

The school's SENCo/LSCo under the Code of Practice will ensure that all staff are aware of the needs of individuals who are at risk of exhibiting poor behaviour and strategies to avoid or deal with this. Those pupils can be helped to develop self-control through the use of appropriate behavioural programmes and by staff consistently using positive strategies to encourage acceptable behaviour and good order. All staff should be aware of these programmes and the strategies to be used as determined by Risk Assessments. Good communication between staff is vital particularly at breaks/lunchtimes where less structured situations can allow behavioural issues to surface.

Staff working as a team will create: -

- A robust Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy
- A calm, secure atmosphere throughout school through the use of consistent approaches
- Opportunities for pupils to earn praise/rewards
- Opportunities to identify problem behaviour or triggers in order to avoid creating further difficulties
- Awareness of pupil behaviour so that attention seeking behaviour is seen but ignored where it is safe to do so
- Opportunities for discussion with the pupil where discussion can take place in order to set targets designed to deal with inappropriate behaviour
- Opportunities for explanation of the action/ consequences to the pupil
- Organisational changes as appropriate
- Opportunities for regular contact with parents/guardians to share plans and develop strategies.
- Positive relationships with Parents/Guardians who must be involved in a behaviour programme. This programme will indicate that restraint may be needed in extreme circumstances. Parents will be informed immediately if the physical intervention of their child has taken place
- Liaise with outside agencies for support and involvement

Every effort will be made to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to pupils or staff, property, buildings or the environment. Where unacceptable behaviour threatens good order and discipline requires intervention, some or all of the following approaches should be taken according to the circumstances of the incident:

- Meet the pupil's needs
- Establish a range of positive behaviour strategies (rule reminders, positively phrased reprimands, rewards for cooperation and good behaviour control)

- Encourage the pupil to make positive choices and develop self- control
- Verbal acknowledgement of unacceptable behaviour with a direction to the pupil to refrain
- Pupil to be taken home and returned to school when able to comply with school rules
- Further verbal reprimand stating:
  - This is the second request for compliance
  - An explanation of why observed behaviour is unacceptable
  - An explanation of what will happen if the unacceptable behaviour continues
  - Warning of intention to intervene physically and that this will cease when the pupil complies.
 If possible, seek assistance of other trained colleagues
- Physical Intervention - reasonable force using the minimum degree of force necessary to prevent a child harming him or herself, others or property

### ***Types of Incidents where Physical Intervention may be required***

The incidents described in Circular 99/9 and Department of Education fall into three broad categories:

- 1. Action due to imminent risk of injury to self or others***
- 2. Action due to developing risk of injury or significant damage to property***
- 3. Action where a pupil is behaving in a way that is comprising good order and discipline***

Examples of situations which fall into one of the first two categories are:

- A pupil attacks a member of staff or another pupil
- A pupil aggressively confronts a member of staff
- Pupils are fighting
- A pupil is engaged in, or is on the verge of committing, deliberate damage or vandalism to property
- A pupil is causing, or is at risk of causing, injury or damage by accident, by rough play, or by misuse of dangerous materials or objects
- A pupil is running in a corridor or on a stairway in a way which he or she might cause an accident or injury to himself, herself or to others
- A pupil absconds from a class or tries to leave school

Examples of situations which fall into the third category are:

- A pupil persistently refuses to obey an instruction to leave a classroom
- A pupil is behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting a lesson

### ***Acceptable Measures of Physical Intervention***

The use of any degree of force can only be deemed reasonable if:

- It is warranted by the particular circumstances of the incident
- It is delivered in accordance with the seriousness of the incident and the consequences which it is intended to prevent
- It is carried out as the minimum action to achieve the desired result
- The age, level of understanding and gender of the pupil are taken into account
- It is likely to achieve the desired result

Wherever possible assistance will be sought from another member of staff before intervening.

**PHYSICAL INTERVENTION USES THE MINIMUM DEGREE OF FORCE NECESSARY FOR THE SHORTEST PERIOD OF TIME TO PREVENT A PUPIL HARMING HIMSELF/HERSELF, OTHERS OR PROPERTY**

Physical Intervention will stop if a child has;

- Difficulty in breathing
- Vomits
- Has a fit or a seizure
- Experiences swelling or change of hue in skin

Wherever physical intervention is used staff will keep talking to the pupil in a reassuring and positive manner unless a Risk Assessment has indicated that this is likely to inflame the situation.

**No child will be held on the ground.**

Unplanned Physical Intervention will trigger a Risk Assessment that may lead to a Physical Intervention Plan/Positive Handling Plan being developed.

***Planned Physical Intervention and Risk Assessment***

- Planned physical intervention will arise from Risk Assessments that the school will carry out on all/some pupils
- Such assessments will be written using a Risk Assessment proforma. Risk Assessments should be signed by the school, parents/guardians and where appropriate pupil
- Planned physical intervention will be agreed in advance (school, parents, other agencies, child)
- Implemented only by named staff
- Must be written and signed plan
- Recorded as per unplanned intervention
- Be part of a holistic care/individual plan
- Shortest time /minimum force

***Physical Intervention can take a number of forms:***

- **Physically interposing between pupils**
- **Blocking a pupil's path**
- **Holding**
- **Leading a pupil by the arm**
- **Shepherding a pupil away by placing a hand in the centre of the back, or using more restrictive holds in extreme circumstances**

**However, staff should never act in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, for example by:**

- **Holding a pupil round the neck and restricting breathing**
- **Slapping, punching, kicking**
- **Throwing an object at a pupil,**
- **Twisting or forcing limbs against a joint**
- **Tripping up a pupil, holding or pulling a pupil by the hair or ear**
- **Holding a pupil face down on the ground**

**Staff should also avoid touching or holding a pupil in any way that might be considered indecent.**

## ***Recording***

Where physical intervention has been used to manage a pupil, a record of the incident will be kept. This record will be made in the school's Safe Handling Incident Book, which will include:

- The name of the pupil
- The date, time and place of incident
- A brief description of the incident

The Incident Book, which is kept in the Principal's office, will be completed as soon as possible after the incident by the Principal/Vice Principal. It will be countersigned by the Principal and the Chair of Governors.

In addition, specific details of the use of planned or unplanned physical intervention will be recorded:

- How the incident developed
- Attempts made to calm the situation
- Names of staff who witnessed the incident
- The outcome of the incident including any injuries sustained, by any pupil or member of staff
- Any damage to property which had resulted
- Whether/how parents have been informed
- Pupils view of the incident and whether they wish to make a complaint
- After an investigation, a summary of actions taken

A Health and Safety Incident Form will be completed when an injury has occurred during physical intervention.

The school will ensure such records are kept and maintained so that:

- Records are being appropriately kept
- Patterns of behaviour in individual pupils or at particular times of the day/certain lessons are being identified and problems addressed
- Training issues arising from the above are being identified and addressed

## ***Action After an Incident***

The Principal will ensure that each incident is reviewed and investigated further as required. In the case of planned intervention, a meeting will be held if the school judges this to be necessary. In the case of unplanned intervention, a meeting will always be held and will involve parents /guardians, pupil and other relevant professionals. Meetings of this type will be arranged within 5 working days of the physical intervention incident.

If further action is required in relation to a member of staff or pupil, this will be pursued through the appropriate procedure

- Child Protection Procedure
- Staff or Pupil Disciplinary Procedure
- School Discipline Policy
- Exclusions Procedure

The member of staff will be kept informed of any action taken.

In the case of action concerning a member of staff, he/she will be advised to seek advice from his/her union.

Where staff have been involved in an incident involving physical intervention they should have access to counselling and support. Within the school, this will be made available through the Principal.

### ***Complaints***

The availability of a clear policy regarding reasonable force and early involvement of parents should reduce the likelihood of complaints but may not eliminate them. Any complaints received by the Principal from parents, staff or any other persons regarding alleged ill treatment of pupils or injuries received by a pupil during the course of physical intervention must be investigated fully by the Principal.

### ***Monitoring of Incidents***

Whenever a member of staff has occasion to use physical intervention, this will always be recorded and documented. Monitoring of incidents will ensure that staff are following the correct procedures and will alert Principal, Governors and staff to the needs of any pupil whose behaviour can only be contained by the use of physical intervention.

### ***Support***

St Colman's is committed to providing regular professional development on behaviour strategies/management for all staff in order to maintain the ethos of the school, its values and the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Staff who have been involved in difficult incidents will be offered the full support of the Principal and the Board of Governors in talking through the incident. In this follow up work staff will look for "lessons to be learnt" and after procedures or develop training as the result of these insights.

Children who have been subject to physical intervention will be given the opportunity to discuss the incident with a member of staff at the first reasonable opportunity following the incident. Such discussions will offer the school fresh opportunities to work together and to renew relationships that may be strained by the incident. Pupils will be informed of ways in which their behaviour could change in order to prevent a repetition of the incident.

## Parent/Guardian Consent Form for Safe Handling

I, the parent/guardian, have read and understood the Safe Handling Policy of St. Colman's Primary School. I acknowledge that the policy outlines the situations in which physical intervention may be necessary for the safety and wellbeing of all pupils and staff.

By signing this consent form, I agree to the following:

I give permission for the staff of St. Colman's Primary School to use physical intervention with my child, if deemed necessary in accordance with the school's Safe Handling Policy.

I understand that physical intervention will only be used as a last resort, when other behaviour management strategies have been unsuccessful, or when immediate action is needed to prevent harm to my child, other pupils, or staff, or to prevent damage to property.

I acknowledge that the school will always strive to use the minimum force necessary to control a situation, and physical intervention will be carried out in a way that respects the dignity and safety of my child.

I also acknowledge that the school may work with external support services if required, and those staff will operate in accordance with the Safe Handling Policy.

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

***Regardless of parent signature recorded above parents must note that in all instances the school will exercise "a safety-first approach" to pupils' well-being.***