



CAMPBELL
COLLEGE

Est 1894

REASONABLE FORCE AND SAFEHANDLING POLICY

Revised: May 2024
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Schools have a 'duty of care' to their students. This may involve staff having to handle students to prevent them harming themselves, others or damaging property.

1. DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY

This policy and our procedures have been developed in line with guidance from:

- DENI Circular (1999/9)
- DENI Document "Towards a Model Policy in Schools on the Use of Reasonable Force", (2002)
- DENI Regional Policy and Framework on the Use of Reasonable Force and Safe Handling" (2004)
- Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection: Code of Conduct for Staff (1999/10)
- Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour (2001)
- DENI Circular: Welfare and Protection of Pupils (2003/13)

2. PRINCIPLES

Campbell College believes that:

- Each student has the right to be educated in a safe and secure environment where each student's moral, intellectual, personal, social and emotional development is promoted
- Parents/Guardians are informed and reassured that their son is being educated in a safe, caring and respectful atmosphere
- All staff have the right to work in a safe and secure environment

3. AIMS

The following purposes underpin this policy:

- To create a learning environment in which students and adults feel safe
- To protect every person in The school community from harm
- To protect all students against any form of physical intervention, which is unnecessary, inappropriate, excessive or harmful
- To develop and implement guidance for staff so that they are clear about the circumstances when they may need to use reasonable force

4. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy is one of the overall pastoral policies and dovetails into the following:

- Positive Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying
- Safeguarding (Child Protection)
- Special Educational Needs
- Complaints Policy
- Educational Visits

5. 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 student, such force as is reasonable in the circumstances for the purpose of preventing the student from doing (or continuing to do) any of the following, namely:

- **Committing any offence;**
- **Causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, and person (including the student himself); or**
- **Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any of its students, 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 student from physically harming himself or others or seriously damaging property, but used in a manner which attempts to preserve the dignity of all concerned.

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

- whether it is reasonable to use force, and the degree of force that could reasonably be employed, given the age, sex, physical strength, size, understanding, medical conditions and any special educational needs of the student;
- the use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of the particular warrant it. The use of any degree of force is unlawful if the particular circumstances do not warrant the use of physical force. Therefore physical force could not be justified to prevent a student from committing a trivial misdemeanour, or in a situation that clearly could be resolved without force; and
- the degree of force employed should be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or the consequences it is intended to prevent. Any force used should always be the minimum needed to defuse the situation.

6. USE AND FORMS OF REASONABLE FORCE

The need to use reasonable force to restrain or control a student should be rare. The application of reasonable force should be used as a last resort, only when other behaviour management strategies have failed, and when the student, other students, staff or property are at risk, or the student is seriously compromising good order and discipline.

When used, **physical intervention** should avert danger by preventing or deflecting a student's action or perhaps by removing a physical object which could be used to harm him/herself or others. It should, at all times, be carefully applied and may be eased by degrees as the student calms down in response to the physical contact. The child should be advised throughout that physical intervention will cease when he/she calms down.

The use of reasonable force should involve a calm and measured approach at all times and be in accordance with agreed strategies and action steps.

When might it be appropriate to use reasonable force?

Reasonable force should be limited to emergency situations and used **only as a last resort** in situations where:

1. action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury;
2. where there is a developing risk of injury, or significant damage to property;
3. where a student is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline

Examples that fall into the first two categories are:

- A student attacks a member of staff, or another student;
- Students are fighting;
- A student 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 student is running in a corridor or on a stairway in which he/she might cause an accident likely to injure him/herself or others;
- A student absconds from a class to leave school (NB this will only apply if a student could be at risk if not kept in the classroom or at school) In circumstances where a student absconds, the school should make every reasonable effort to inform the parent/carer

Examples that fall into the third category are

- A student persistently refuses to obey an order to leave a classroom; and
- A student behaving in a way that is seriously disrupting the lesson (this must be handled carefully and preferably with another member of staff present

The College's Head of Learning Support (SENCo) will keep staff informed about students with special educational needs who may require special attention to their physical management. Staff should consult with the SENCo regarding any concerns which they have about the physical management of students with SEN.

Where can reasonable force be used?

The right of a teacher or other person to use reasonable force applies where the student concerned is on the school premises and when he/she has been authorised to have lawful control or charge of the student concerned elsewhere, eg supervision of students in bus queues, on a field trip, or other authorised out of school activity such as a sporting event or educational visit.

What forms may physical intervention take?

- physically interposing between students;
- blocking a student's path;
- holding;
- leading a student by the hand or arm;
- shepherding a student away by placing a hand in the centre of the back; or
- (in extreme circumstances) using more restrictive holds

What forms may physical intervention NOT take?

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, such as holding around the neck, kicking, slapping, tripping, any hold which might restrict breathing (this list is not exhaustive) should not be permitted under any circumstances:

Who may use reasonable force?

Article 4 of the 1998 Order authorises teachers to use reasonable force for the for the reasons already mentioned in section 5.

Other members of staff at the College can also authorised by the Headmaster to use reasonable force in the circumstances mentioned in section 5.

These include:

- Members of staff who are in the employment of the College
- Temporary members of staff employed by the College (e.g. substitute teachers)
- Suitably vetted volunteers.
 - These volunteers should normally work under the direction and supervision of a teacher or other member of staff and should not be expected to assume sole responsibility
 - There may, however, be circumstances in which the Headmaster (or deputy) may need to authorise a volunteer to use reasonable force under exceptional circumstances. This might include a volunteer helping with a school visit, trip, residential or when a member of teaching staff is not readily available to deal with an incident.
 - Where volunteers are so authorised, they should receive appropriate training and guidance.

[Advice to staff is given in APPENDIX 1]

7. PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH STUDENTS

Although physical contact with students should be avoided, there can be occasions when physical contact with a student may be proper or necessary to demonstrate exercises or techniques during some subjects such as PE, sports coaching, music, drama or technology and design, or if a member of staff has to give first-aid.

8. RECORD KEEPING

It is extremely important that there is a detailed, contemporaneous, written report of any occasion (except minor or trivial incidents) where reasonable force is used. This may help prevent any misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the incident, and it will be helpful should there be a complaint.

The College will keep an up-to-date record of all such incidents, in an incident book.

Immediately following any such incident the member of staff concerned should tell the Headmaster or the Vice-Principal (Designated Teacher) and provide a short written factual report as soon as possible afterwards.

[SEE APPENDIX 2]

That report should include:

- the name(s) of the student(s) involved, and when and where the incident took place;
- the names of any other staff or students who witnessed the incident;
- the reason that force was necessary (eg to prevent injury to the student, another student or a member of staff);
- briefly, how the incident began and progressed, including details of the student's behaviour, what was said by each of the parties, the steps taken to defuse or calm the situation, the degree of force used, how that was applied, and for how long;
- the student's response, and the outcome of the incident; and
- details of any obvious or apparent injury suffered by the student, or any other person, and of any damage to property.

The Headmaster or a Vice-Principal will report all incidents where reasonable force was used to the Board of Governors (and specifically the designated Governor for Child Protection) at least annually.

Records of incidents should be kept for 5 years after the date they occurred.

9. COMPLAINTS

In the event of a complaint made against a member of staff either by, or on behalf of the child, this will be dealt with in accordance with the College's Complaint Policy.

10 REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Governors; however, the College may revise the policy at any time it considers necessary. The latest version will be available by contacting the College.

APPENDIX 1

GUIDANCE FOR STAFF

PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

All teachers need to be aware of strategies and techniques for dealing with difficult students and steps, which they can take to defuse and calm a situation. The strategies listed below as examples will be influenced by the age of the student(s) and the context in which they are applied.

1. Move calmly and confidently;
2. Make simple, clear statements;
3. Intervene early;
4. Try to maintain eye contact;
5. If necessary summon help before the problem escalates; and
6. If possible, remove audience from the immediate location.

ACTION STEPS

1. Tell the student who is misbehaving to stop and tell him/her the possible consequences of failure to do so.
2. If possible, summon another adult.
3. Continue to communicate with the student throughout the incident.
4. Make it clear that physical intervention will cease as soon as it is no longer necessary.
5. Appropriate follow-up action should be taken, which may include
 - a. providing medical support;
 - b. providing respite for those involved; and
 - c. accessing external advice/support.

A calm and measured approach to a situation is needed and staff should never give the impression that they have lost their temper or are acting out of anger or frustration when handling a problem.

INTERVENTION GUIDELINES

There are situations where staff should not intervene without help. Assistance should be sought when dealing, for example, with:

- an older student;
- a physically large student;
- more than one student;
- when the teacher believes that he/she may be at risk of injury.

In those circumstances where the member of staff has decided that it is not appropriate to restrain the student without help, he/she should:

- remove other students who might be at risk;
- summon assistance from colleagues;
- where necessary, contact the police;
- inform the student(s) that help will be arriving; and
- continue to attempt to defuse the situation orally, and try to prevent the incident from escalating.

APPENDIX 2

RECORD OF THE USE OF REASONABLE FORCE

This form should be completed as soon after the event has occurred and should be given to the Vice-Principal (Designated Teacher).

Date of Incident		Time of Incident	
Student Name:		Date of Birth	
Member(s) of staff involved			
Adult witness(es) to incident			
Student witness(es) to incident			
Outline of event leading to the incident, including place where the incident occurred, description of student'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 (e.g. respite , support etc)			
Description of any injuries sustained, any subsequent treatment and any damage to property			
Date parent informed		Time	
By whom			
Outline of parental response			

Signature _____ (person completing form) Date _____

Signature _____ (teacher in charge) Date _____

Signature _____ (Headmaster) Date _____

Brief Description of any subsequent event/action