

## Safe Handling Policy

Document Information			
Created by:	Principal	Reviewed by:	Principal
Review Cycle:	Biennially	Next Review:	<b>March 2025</b>
Principal: Ahmed Nadhim Al-Talib			

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## Rational

It is the responsibility of all staff to provide a safe and secure environment for the entire school community (students and staff) and to promote and sustain appropriate behaviour.

The working definition of 'reasonable force' is: The minimum force necessary to prevent a student from physically harming themselves or others or seriously damaging property but used in a manner to preserve the dignity of all concerned.

We need to consider:

- Planned intervention in which staff employ, where necessary, pre-arranged strategies based upon a risk assessment and recorded information.
- Unplanned use of force/intervention, which occurs in response to unforeseen events e.g. student fights, class refusal, absconding from school.

Safe handling can be used by any member of staff, who is authorised by the principal to have lawful control or charge of the students, if the student(s) are seen to be at risk.

## Procedures

A member of staff may have to decide between making an intervention using reasonable force by placing him/herself in a risky situation or standing back and thereby allowing students to face potential danger. There will always be an element of personal judgment in these decisions. However, it is reasonable to expect a member of staff to engage in some risk, where there is evidence of such risk 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 students in bus queues, or other authorised out of school activities.

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-defense or because there is imminent risk of injury to another student or person.
- There is a developing risk of injury to another student or person, or significant damage to property.
- A student is behaving in a way that compromises the safety of other students and to themselves.

## Forms of reasonable force

Where other behaviour management strategies have failed, reasonable force should be used in a way that preserves the dignity and respect of all concerned. A calm and measured approach should be taken at all times. The reasonable force/safe handling should be appropriate to the particular student, and be in accordance with the schools agreed strategies and the following procedure, which must be adhered to at all times:

- Tell the student to stop the inappropriate behaviour.
- Ask the student to behave appropriately, clearly stating the desired behaviour.
- Tell the student in an age-appropriate manner that physical/safe handling intervention will take place.
- Intervene in a safe and measured way.

If the teacher or other member of staff feels at risk, he/she should seek support from the nearest member of staff.

Possible forms of reasonable physical/safe handling used by the school will depend on individual circumstances and may include:

- Separating students who are fighting or who are about to fight.
- Blocking a student's path.
- Leading a pupil by the arm.
- Shepherding a student away.
- Holding a student who may be in distress, to comfort/calm down.
- Picking a child up in a nurturing way to provide comfort and to remove them from an unsafe situation – this can be used in the event of younger child who is under distress.

## **Health and Safety**

When using reasonable force/safe handling, the student's health and safety must always be considered. Interventions should involve the minimum amount of force necessary to resolve the situation and calm the student.

## **Contacting Parents**

Parents/caregivers should be contacted as soon as possible and the incident should be clearly explained to them (with a translator if necessary). This must also be recorded in Appendix 1.

To ensure parents have an understanding that their child was handled safely and for effectiveness, the safer handling strategies outlined in this policy should be shared with parents.



