**The Rock National School**

**Safe Handling** **Policy**

**Ethos:**

The Rock NS is a vertical co-educational Catholic school whose enrolment includes pupils with a diagnosis of general learning disabilities, ADHD, ASD, Down’s Syndrome, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. The role of the school is to provide an appropriate education for all its pupils. A stable secure learning environment is an essential requirement to achieve this goal. This policy reflects the school’s ethos and is written in consultation with the following partners – staff, parents, pupils (where relevant) and patron.

**Rationale:**

In the first instance our school applies the principles outlined in our Code of Behaviour, which provide guidelines to staff on the use of day to day positive behavioural management strategies. These are designed to help all pupils to modify/manage their own behaviour in the long-term. **Where these strategies are not working and it is foreseeable that a pupil might engage in high risk behaviours requiring a physical intervention or restrictive practice, this policy applies**.

The Board of Management takes seriously its duty of care to pupils, employees and

visitors noting that: the paramount concerns are for the safety and welfare of the pupils in the school as well as for the safety and welfare of the adults who look after them -therefore we will aim to implement our duty of care to all affected by our work at all times.

**The** **policy** **is** **based** **on** **guidance** **from** **the** **following:**

 Education and Welfare Act 2000

 Human Rights Working Group on Restraint and Seclusion 2005 (Northern Ireland)

 Best Practice Guidelines on the Use of Physical Restraints: Special Residential

Board 2006

 Health and Safety at Work Act 2007 Safety, Health and Welfare At Work Act, 2005 (as well as other statutes and standards)

 Physical Contact; Care, Comfort and Restraint, by Bernard Allen, 2011

 Children First Guidelines 2011

 Guidelines for Schools on Supporting Students with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties - An information guide for Primary Schools: DES 2013.

**Other** **Relevant** **Policies**

* Child Safeguarding
* Anti Bullying
* Code of Behaviour
* Health and Safety
* Admissions and Enrolment
* Grievance Procedures.

**AIMS** **AND** **OBJECTIVES:**

1. To provide clear guidelines to staff, pupils and parents regarding the use of restrictive practices/physical interventions in schools, including the use of time out and withdrawal.

2. To emphasise a culture within the school of prevention and reduction of the use of physical interventions/restrictive practices.

3. To manage serious incidents when they occur.

4. To reduce the risks associated with serious incidents such as injuries to self or others or serious damage to property.

**SECTION** **1** **-** **PHYSICAL** **CONTACT:**

There are many times when physical contact is used in our school, such as affirming a child with a congratulatory shake of hands, high five, administering first aid and up to and including meeting intimate care needs. **However, our duty of care to others means that it may on occasion also be necessary to use physical contact to restrain a child who is putting themselves or another person at risk of injury and/or harm**. This policy governs the use of these practices. The following table, which is not exhaustive, outlines the circumstances where physical contact may be used in the school:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** **1** | **Category** **2** | | **Category** **3** | **Category** **4** | **Category** **5** |
| **Curriculum** | **Reassurance/** **Comfort** | | **Intimate** **Care/** **First** **Aid/Safety** | **Non-Contact** **Restrictions/**  **Containment** | **Use** **of** **Physical** **Intervention/** **Force** |
| PE/ Games | Shake hands, high five or pat on the shoulder for praise/ reassurance | | Cleaning cuts | Time out/time away from area of conflict. | Disengaging from a grab/ hair pull, scratch, bite, pinch |
| Music | Holding hand of upset child or to prevent absconding | | Toileting | Movement or sensory break as appropriate. | Escorting a resisting pupil to a safer location |
| Drama | High Fives | | Lifting a child down from a height | Fences around playgrounds | Breaking up a fight/ blocking a pupil’s path |
| Sensory Programmes | Hugs | | Dressing/ personal hygiene | Safety belt on transport | Restraint |
| Physical Prompting to support learning |  | Comforting an upset or injured child | Taking a dangerous object from a child | Prevention from participating in certain curricular activities that may pose unacceptable risks | Withdrawal/ seclusion |
|  | |

Categories 1 through 4 and are necessary in order to take care of and teach our pupils and are not considered to be restrictive. Category 5, however, is restrictive and requires careful thought and consideration before being employed by staff. ***Any use of such restrictions must be discussed with the Principal and agreed with parents/guardians in advance or parents/guardians informed after an episode has occurred and in some instances with relevant multi-disciplinary staff.***

**SECTION** **2** **-** **PREVENTION**

The school seeks in the first instance to be proactive at all times to prevent and minimise the need to use physical interventions and restrictive practices by employing de-escalation strategies and environmental alterations as follows:

1. De-escalation Strategies

Sensory breaks, calm stance and facial expression of staff, careful use of tone of voice and choice of words by staff, change of staff, distraction/diversion, use of humour, negotiation, offering choices, outlining limits/boundaries, positive reminders, planned ignoring, reassurance, short tasks only, time given to process/cool down, verbal supports, visual schedules, praise, use of rewards, close supervision.

2. Environmental Alterations

1:1 teaching areas, access to preferred activities where possible, access to class teacher/SET/SNA most familiar with the child, timetables organised to minimise risks, reduced pupil/staff ratios, access to specialist staff when and where possible, opportunities provided to ‘burn off energy’, fixed furniture in some areas, high handles on some doors, locks on some doors, reduced access to equipment in some rooms, coded access to front door, fenced in playgrounds.

3. Children who have special needs or children who have emerging needs which require adult intervention in terms of this policy may require a specific, targeted Positive Handling Plans (see Section 3). In such cases a meeting will be organised with relevant staff and parents/guardians to discuss and review prevention strategies.

**SECTION** **3** **-** **POSITIVE** **HANDLING** **PLANS** (see sample Appendix B)

These may be devised for pupils assessed as being of greatest risk of needing restrictive physical interventions. The school and parents/guardians would need to liaise with other multi-disciplinary support services as necessary. A Positive Handling Plan may be part of a PPP (Pupil Personal Plan).

This plan should ideally contain the following:

 a brief history of the pupil

 a brief outline of likes/dislikes and known triggers

 a functional assessment of the behaviour using information from several sources such as parents, previous staff, carers, and appropriate behavioural assessment charts and graphs

 a multi- element behaviour support plan outlining environmental alterations, direct interventions, skills teaching and reactive strategies

 de-escalation strategies to employ when behaviours start to occur

 recommended physical interventions which may be employed when de-escalation strategies are unsuccessful or not possible

 planned reviews of any recommended restrictive practices

 a list of persons to whom the plan needs to be communicated

 It should be signed by parents and Principal.

**SECTION** **4** **-** **THE** **FOLLOWING** **PERSONS** **ARE** **AUTHORISED** **TO** **USE** **RESTRAINT/** **FORCE** **IN** **THE** **SCHOOL** **IN** **THE** **CIRCUMSTANCES** **OUTLINED** **BELOW:**

1. Unforeseen or Emergency Situations: e.g a child suddenly tries to climb over a fence or run out on a road, or attempts to hurt another unexpectedly – **all** **staff** must use their

judgement and take appropriate action to safeguard pupils or staff whilst calling for assistance from other staff.

1. Pupils with Positive Handling Plans: The school will endeavour to ensure that staff with up to date training and knowledge of the pupil’s plan are available to these pupils. In the event that this is not possible any staff member should take appropriate action to safeguard the situation whilst calling for assistance from trained staff.

**SECTION** **5** **-** **DECIDING** **WHETHER** **OR** **NOT** **TO** **USE** **FORCE**

The school endeavours to encourage staff to STOP AND THINK before employing a physical intervention as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **ACT** | **BALANCE** | **CHOOSE** |
|  Adopt a calm, non-threatening stance and posture   Use a slow controlled voice   Give clear verbal directions   Pause and allow time for compliance |  The likely outcomes if force is used against the likely outcomes if it is not   Short term risks versus long term risks   Best interests of the child against the best interests of other children and staff |  Persons who are most likely to succeed   Best place available  Best time available   Minimum use of force necessary to achieve the desired result |

**SECTION** **6** **-** **USING** **RESTRAINT**

If restraint is used staff must ask themselves the following questions:

 Am I using the minimum force for the shortest time?

 Is the hold I’m using correct?

 Can I reduce the amount of pressure?

 How best can I communicate with the child and with other staff?

 Should I ask someone else to take over?

**SECTION** **7** **-** **LAST** **RESORT/EARLY** **INTERVENTION**

Force or restraint should be used as a last resort. This does not mean that all other possible strategies must be tried and tested beforehand, it means that staff must make a considered judgement balancing the risks involved, thus allowing informed decisions be made. Some children may have stereotypical patterns of behaviour which alert staff to a developing crisis. Early action may prevent a risk of injury, thus justifying the use of the physical intervention. The child’s Positive Handling Plan should reflect this. Training in physical restraint, where available and affordable, may be offered to school staff.

**SECTION** **8** **-** **USING** **TIME-OUT/WITHDRAWAL/COMFORT**

Sometimes a child cannot manage in a classroom setting for a variety of reasons and needs to be withdrawn to allow teaching and learning to continue for the rest of the pupils. This can happen in 3 ways:

**1.** **Time Out** – This may be used informally for pupils who need time or space to calm/ cool down, i.e. child is encouraged or prompted to move to another table, chair or designated classroom area for a short period of time or may be sent ‘on a message’. The purpose of this is to divert or distract the pupil.

**2.** **Withdrawal/Comfort** – This may be used to move a child to another place outside of the classroom where he or she is continually supported or monitored by staff either inside or outside the area the child is in. (Alternatively, all the children may be asked to leave the classroom and the child can be isolated in their own classroom). This may involve physically intervening to move the child and/or preventing the child from leaving the area until staff consider that it is safe to do so. Staff must continuously attempt to distract or divert the child and return the child to his/her classroom as soon as it is safe to do so. This may take some time if the pupil demonstrates that he/she requires a break from activities that he/she finds over-stimulating. Doors are not secured in this instance. The purpose of this is to safeguard pupils and staff in situations that have the potential to be high risk to themselves or others.

**3.** **Seclusion** – Removal to the office/other area away from the point of conflict is a recognised restrictive physical intervention and is only considered in exceptional circumstances. The use of this intervention must be proportionate to the risk presented by the pupil. It may be used at times of emergency only where the risks of significant injury to pupils or staff are very high and it is not practicable to otherwise communicate with the child. The child is moved using an appropriate physical intervention to a pupil support room and the door is secured by staff holding the handle of the door (only if deemed necessary) to prevent the pupil from charging out onto the corridor where other pupils may be walking. Pupils are continuously monitored via glass panels to ensure their safety. The length of time the door is secured is noted/recorded and the Principal or Deputy contacted if the door is secured from 3-15 minutes and/or more than 3 times in one day (or as agreed with parents/guardians). If the Principal or Deputy is concerned for the welfare of any child in these circumstances, parents/guardians will be asked to bring the child home. Incident Reports are filled out for each instance. Parents/guardians are informed as agreed. *A Positive Handling Plan will need to be agreed with parents/guardians in these instances and will be reviewed by the Principal and Deputy after each instance to try to minimise the need for this intervention.* The purpose of this is to safeguard pupils and/or staff in situations of very high risk to themselves or others. A PHP should have instructions/recommendations in place for after incidents occur – how to act with the child. E.g. hydrate the child, allow some ‘down time’ as appropriate.

***Use*** ***of*** ***seclusion*** ***for*** ***reasons*** ***of*** ***sanction/punishment*** ***or*** ***staff*** ***convenience*** ***is*** ***NOT*** ***permitted.*** ***This*** ***is*** ***unlawful*** ***and*** ***will*** ***be*** ***dealt*** ***with*** ***appropriately*** ***by*** ***the*** ***B.O.M.*** ***Child*** ***Safeguarding*** ***services*** ***and/or*** ***Gardai*** ***will*** ***be*** ***contacted.***

**SECTION** **9** **-** **POST** **INCIDENT** **SUPPORT**

Following an incident the priority is to look after the pupils and staff involved before reports are filled out and reviews held.

Incident Report/Debriefing (Appendix C)

Incident reports should be filled out by the staff involved following the use of force or restraint as outlined in Section 1 above. The best time to fill out an incident report is when the situation has settled and the pupil and staff have had time to recover. The form is then checked by the Principal and/or Deputy to decide if any follow up action is required to provide any further care or reassurance to pupils or staff, to review the interventions used by staff and to inform any future recommendations. It is practice to provide parents/guardians with copies of incidents reports on request, as long as there is no further risk to children or breach of data protection re other pupils or staff. Both the Principal and Deputy check and discuss each incident report involving physical interventions/restraint. The incidents are recorded in the Pupil’s Positive Handling Plan for discussion with parents/guardians as agreed. Some parents wish to be informed of every incident after they occur, others prefer to be informed at review meetings. The Principal is the only person authorised by the Board to release an incident report to a parent/guardian. The Principal may defer to the Chairperson of the Board if necessary.

**Checklist for Principal/Deputy Principal**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **CHECK** | **RECORD** | **REPORT TO** | **REVIEW**  **( if necessary)** |
| Has anyone been hurt? (pupils or staff)  Is medical attention required? Does anyone need a drink of water/rest? | Check Incident Report and decide if any follow up is required  If injuries were sustained, fill out accident report for insurance purposes | Parents/guardians (as agreed)  BOM if necessary Insurers if medical attention was necessary | Positive Handling Plan  Policy Guidance Risk Assessment Staff Training |

**SECTION** **10** **-** **COMPLAINTS** **AND** **ALLEGATIONS:**

The school seeks to engage positively with parents/guardians regarding all aspects of their child’s education, care and management. Parents/guardians of pupils who engage in high risk challenging behaviours are prioritised for meetings/phone calls etc. with the Principal and/or Deputy. The school will endeavour to keep parents/guardians informed in a manner that is reasonable and in the best interests of the child. This will take the form of meetings, e-mails, phone calls, diaries or letters.

**How** **to** **make** **a** **Complaint:**

 Parents/guardians wishing to make a complaint should in the first instance contact the Principal who will furnish the parent with a copy of the Complaints Procedure.

 Staff wishing to make a complaint should in the first instance contact the Principal who will furnish the staff member with a copy of the Complaints Procedure.

**SECTION** **11** **-** **REVIEW** **PROCEDURES**

It is recommended that this policy is reviewed every three years, in the light of changing information and in consultation with the wider community.

**SECTION** **12** **-** **TIMEFRAME**

The completed policy was circulated to all staff following ratification. Parents/guardians were notified of the fact that the policy had been drawn up and a copy was posted on the school website.

**Ratified:** This policy was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

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

Chairperson, Board of Management

**Appendix** **B** **-** **POSITIVE** **HANDLING** **PLAN**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Pupil’s** **Name** **&** **D.O.** **B.** | **Names** **of** **staff** **and** **parents** **involved** **in** **devising** **this** **plan** | **Start** **Date** | **Date** **Plan** **-Discontinued** |
|  |  |  |  |

1. **Background** **Information** (diagnosis, medical, allergies, medication, sight, hearing, etc.):

2. **Profile** **of** **child** (triggers, likes, dislikes, etc.):

**3.** **Functional** **Assessment** **of** **Behaviour:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Antecedent | Behaviour | Occurrence | Function(escape, attention, tangible, sensory) | Consequence (eg child avoided or gained something |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**4.** **Behaviour** **Support** **Plan:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Environmental Alteration | Direct Intervention (control of antecedents) | Skills Teaching (coping, tolerance, function, general) | Reactive Strategies (see 5) |
|  |  |  |  |

**5.** **Reactive** **Strategies:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | What you see | What you do |
| Anxious phase |  |  |
| Escalation Phase |  |  |
| Crises Phase |  |  |
| Recovery Phase |  |  |

6. **Recommended** **Physical** **Interventions** **for** **this** **child** (as per policy guidelines and training):

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Non-contact Restrictions / Containment | Disengagement strategy | Physical Intervention | Use of support room for withdrawal or seclusion |
|  |  |  |  |

**7.** **Review** **Dates** **&** **Comments:**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**8.** **Incident** **Diary:**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**9.** **Plan** **communicated** **to:** **(signed** **and** **dated).** Parents/guardians:

Class Staff: Principal:

**Appendix** **C** **-** **Incident** **/** **Minor** **Accident** **Report** **and** **Risk** **Assessment**

Pupil: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Pupil Enrolment No: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 *What* *happened?*

 *What* *were* *the* *risks involved?*

 *What* *did* *you* *do?*

 *Why* *did* *you* *do* *what* *you* *did?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date: Time: Location: | |
| *What* *happened?*  (brief outline of the significant aspects of the incident) |  |
| *What* *were* *the* *risks* *involved?*  (to pupil, staff or other pupils) |  |
| *What* *did* *you* *do?*  (factual, brief account of the actions you took. Include any ‘on the spot’ actions you took to minimise risks to the child, other children or staff). See overleaf for assistance paragraph 1 |  |
| *How* *was* *this* *in* *the* *best* *interests* *of* *the* *child?*  *How was this in the best interests of other children or staff?* |  |

Other staff present: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Principal

**Incident** **Sheet** **(&** **Risk** **Assessment)**

**1.** **Helpful** **Phrases** **for** ***‘What*** ***did*** ***you*** ***do?’***

Asked for assistance - drew towards - eased away - encouraged - guided – used a help hug - led child to the support room/yard/sensory room where s/he could be monitored/observed -monitored/observed (from outside the door) - moved child away from the area of the incident – (see paragraph 3 below) used physical prompt - used visuals/schedules/timetables -reassured - secured the door - supported - talked pupil down - withdrew other pupils – cleared the area of items that could be thrown – moved other pupils away from danger – asked for help – cleared the area of other pupils – sent for a senior member of staff – asked other staff to withdraw from the area – withdrew myself to a safe distance – kept an eye out for members of the public who might be at risk – prevent emotional/psychological distress to other pupils

**2.** **Helpful** **Phrases** **for** ***‘How*** ***was*** ***this*** ***in*** ***the*** ***best*** ***interests*** ***of*** ***the*** ***child?’***

Maintain dignity of the child - prevent negative social outcome for child - prevent distress -prevent pain – reduce risk of injury - reduce possibility of... - unsafe situation for pupil(s)/staff -welfare of pupil(s)/staff etc…..prevent emotional/psychological distress

**3.** **Sample** **script** **to** ***‘talk*** ***pupil*** ***down’***

Use the following script to assist you to ‘talk pupils down’ during an incident where the pupil is demonstrating by his/her actions that s/he is feeling ‘out of control’

*1.* *Name* (pause to get attention). *I* *can* *see* *something* *has* *happened.* 2. *I* *can* *see* *you* *are* *upset*.

3. *Tell* *me* *what* *happened* (if pupil can verbalise) **OR** *I’ll* *find* *out* *what* *happened* *from* *name* (staff member, parent, other pupil).

*4.* *I* *want* *to* *help* *you.*

5. *Let’s* *-* *go* *outside* */* *inside* *-* *go* *for* *a* *walk* *-* *to* *another* *room,* etc. (try to get pupil to move away from the scene of the incident depending on the situation).

Offer water if appropriate.