



USE OF PHYSICAL RESTRAINT POLICY

The Education and Training Act defines physical restraint as “physical force to prevent, restrict, or subdue the movement of the student’s body or part of the student’s body against the student’s will.”

The Education and Training Act states that teachers and authorised staff members must not physically restrain unless it is necessary to prevent imminent harm to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child, young person or to another person, and the teacher or staff member reasonably believes there is no other option available in the circumstances.

RATIONALE

Serious situations can arise in schools where a student or students risk harm to themselves or others.

School staff require safe ways to potentially manage dangerous situations.

PURPOSE

1. To protect the well-being of staff and students.
2. To provide guidelines for the use of physical restraint when it is seen as a last resort.
3. To provide staff with guidelines and ideas for de-escalating serious situations.
4. To record any incidents of physical restraint and provide for debriefing of these incidents.
5. To provide a clear pathway for complaints.
6. To monitor the emotional impact of such an event on staff and students

GUIDELINES

Preventative Techniques:

- this is about relationship building and is particularly important for students who regularly present with high risk behaviours.
- attempt to understand the student and try to learn the signs of stress or unhappiness.
- respect the student by: demonstrating that you are there to help; being reasonable; providing choices and compromise while maintaining authority.
- preserve the student’s dignity. This may mean dealing with things in private. Do not mock or treat the matter lightly.

De-escalation Techniques:

- create space and time: remove the audience; provide physical space; name the emotion calmly, e.g. “I can see that you are very frustrated”; wait.
- communicate calmly and quietly (even when the student is loud).
- monitor your own body language and provide opportunity for the student to move out of the situation with dignity.
- when appropriate, give the student clear choices and/or directions to help them feel more secure and regain control.
- if escalation occurs, move further away, have an exit plan and send for help if necessary.

What may escalate the behaviour?

- threatening the student.
- arguing or interrupting.
- contradicting what the student says, even if they are wrong.
- challenging the student.
- trying to shame the student.

Use physical restraint only when:

- there is ‘imminent danger of physical injury.’ This can be to the student themselves or others.
- preventative and de-escalation techniques have not reduced the risk of injury.

Match the physical restraint to the situation:

- use only where justifiable.
- use the minimum force necessary.
- use only for as long as is necessary.

Examples of “imminent danger”:

- a student moving in with a weapon or something being used as a weapon with a clear intent to harm another person.
- a student physically attacking another person, or is about to.
- a student throwing items, e.g. furniture, equipment and/or breaking glass close to others.
- a student putting themselves in danger, e.g. running on the road or trying to harm themselves.

Examples which do not represent “imminent danger”:

- refusal behaviours.
- disruptive behaviour that does not put another person in danger of being hurt.
- verbal threats.
- defiant behaviour.
- a student wanting to leave without permission.
- a student damaging property, unless this could cause injury.

Guidance if you have to use physical restraint:

- ideally, physical restraint should only be used by staff trained in its safe use, and trained in emergency first aid.
- Winton School teaching staff are given permission to use physical restraint when required or necessary.
- Winton School Support Staff, have been trained in the safe use of physical restraint and therefore are also given permission by the Board to use it when required or necessary.
- if there is no one with training nearby and you feel you can use physical restraint safely, both for yourself and the student, use your judgement and intervene.
- if you do not have the skills or confidence, remove the other students and call for help.
- call the police when a student cannot be managed safely and the imminent danger to students, staff or themselves remains after all alternatives have been explored.

Do not use these restraints:

- any restraint that inhibits breathing.
- any restraint that inhibits speaking or the main method of communication e.g. sign language if this is the student's main method to communicate.
- prone (face-down) physical restraint.
- pressure points and pain holds.
- tackling, sitting, lying or kneeling on a student.
- pressure on the chest or neck.
- hyperextension (bending back) of joints.
- headlocks.
- using force to take/drag a student, who is resisting, to another location.
- restraint when moving a student from one place to another – trying to get them into a van or taxi, for example – when they are in an escalated state, as this may escalate them further.

Monitoring:

- Monitor continuously while applying the restraint and stop as soon as the danger has passed.
- Monitor the staff member and student for the rest of the school day. Watch for shock, unnoticed injuries and delayed effects, physical or psychological.

Contact Parents:

- Contact parents or caregivers on the same day, as soon as possible after the incident, so they can monitor their child's wellbeing at home. The Principal will do this (see below). On the same day, the Principal, or the Deputy Principal in their absence, is to contact the parents.

Follow Up:

- Notify the Board Presiding Member as soon as possible.
- At the next Staff Meeting hold a debriefing with staff about the incident.
- If necessary, hold a formal debriefing with the parents / caregivers and the student.
- The Principal is to decide if the MOE needs to be advised and if any support and / or assistance is required.

Complaint:

- If any student, parent or caregiver is dissatisfied with the way an incident has been handled, they are encouraged to follow the school's Complaints Procedure. This is on display in the school foyer and on the school's website.

Reporting and Documenting:

- After an incident involving physical restraint, the staff member involved must fill out and sign an 'Incident of Physical Restraint form' (available from the office and Board Policies folder).
- Other witnesses (if any) and the Principal or Principal's delegate must also sign the form.
- If the Principal applied the restraint, a delegated member of senior management must sign the form.
- This form needs to be emailed to physical.restraint@education.govt.nz.
- The completed form is to be put on the student's file and made available to the student's teacher and parents or caregivers.
- All incidents of physical restraint must be reported to the Ministry of Education and the Board.

Note on Seclusion:

- Seclusion is when a student is involuntarily placed alone in a room, at any time or for any duration, from which they cannot freely exit. Even if the door is not locked or blocked, there may be a level of authority or coercion which leads the student to believe that they cannot exit the room.
- Seclusion is not the same as the use of timeout. Timeout can be when a student is asked to leave an activity or area because of their behaviour and go to another specified area where they must stay until told they can return. Timeout can also be when a student voluntarily takes themselves to an agreed space. With timeout, the room is not locked, and although the student may well understand that they should stay there, they also realise that they can leave the room at any time if they so choose. The point is that the student has a choice about whether to comply or not.
- Seclusion is not to be used at Winton School.

Reviewed: July 2024

Next Review: July 2025