

NAG 5

RESTRAINT & SECLUSION Policy

Rationale

In accordance with National Administration Guideline 5, the Board of Trustees is required to ensure a physically and emotionally safe environment, and is required to:

- Have a policy on physical restraint and seclusion
- Make the policy available to parents and caregivers
- Provide a clear complaints process for students, parents and caregivers
- Promote the minimisation of physical restraint
- Ensure that seclusion is never used as a behaviour management technique

The School will:

- Promote the goal of minimising the use of physical restraint through a focus on alternative strategies;
- Ensure appropriate training is provided that aligns with the goal of minimising physical restraint in school;
- Monitor and report the use of physical restraint within the school (including gathering and analysing information, identifying trends, and documenting any incident);
- Collate information about physical restraint in a report and share data on physical restraint regularly with the Board of Trustees;
- Manage any complaints and feedback
- Follow guidance from and, where appropriate, seek support from the Ministry of Education in relation to physical restraint.

Purpose

This Policy is based upon best practice, as set out in Guidance for New Zealand Schools on Behaviour Management to Minimise Physical Restraint (Ministry of Education, August 2017). The purposes of the policy include that:

- that de-escalation strategies are actively promoted as an alternative to restraint;
- that restraint is only used as a last resort in situations involving imminent danger; and
- that seclusion of students is prohibited at all times.

Definitions

“Physical restraint” is when a school staff member uses their own body to deliberately limit the movement of a student.

The following are not examples of physical restraint:

- temporary physical contact, such as a hand on the arm, back or shoulders to remove a student from a situation to a safer place;
- holding a student with a disability to move them to another location, or help them to get in a mobility support, vehicle or use the stairs;
- harness restraint, when keeping a student and others safe in a moving vehicle, or when recommended by a physiotherapist or occupational therapist for safety or body positioning;
- “shepherding” a group of younger children from one place to another;

- holding the hand of a child who is happy to have their hand held for a short time;
- comforting a child with a hand on the shoulder;
- picking a child up if they need help (for example, stuck in a tree, to be moved due to minor injury or to remove them from a potentially dangerous situation of hazard).

“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 (including, if not locked, where a level of authority or coercion leads to a student believing that they must not or cannot exit the room in which they are confined). Seclusion does not refer to the use of ‘timeout’, such as:

- 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;
- a student voluntarily takes themselves to an agreed space or unlocked room (part of a planned intervention) to de-stimulate or calm down;
- they take themselves, or are asked, to go to a quiet place in the classroom to calm down.

“Imminent danger”: Refers to situations involving serious threat of physical harm to a person or persons, including (but not limited to) examples such as:

- A student moving in with a weapon, or something that could be used as a weapon, with intent on using violence towards another person;
- A student physically attacking another person, or seemingly about to physically attack another person;
- A student throwing furniture, computers, or breaking glass close to others who would be injured if hit;
- A student putting themselves in danger, for example running onto a road or trying to harm themselves.

The following situations do not constitute imminent danger:

- behaviour that is disrupting the classroom but not putting anyone in danger of being hurt;
- refusal to comply with an adult’s request;
- verbal threats;
- a student trying to leave the classroom or school without permission;
- damaging property, unless this could cause injury.

Guidelines

1. Alternatives to Physical restraint: physical restraint is a serious intervention. The first aim is to avoid needing to use physical restraint.

Consider the following:

- Respect the student; Preserve the student’s dignity;
- Address private or sensitive issues in private;
- Take the student seriously and address issues quickly;
- Demonstrate a supportive approach: “I’m here to help”; Be reasonable;
- Promote and accept compromise or negotiated solutions, while maintaining authority;
- Consider appropriate preventative techniques; Avoid the use of inappropriate humour such as sarcasm or mocking.
- Be flexible in your responses: adapt what you’re doing to the demands of the situation;
- Understand the student; Get to know the student and identify potentially difficult times or situations that may be stressful or difficult for them; Identify the student’s personal signs of stress or unhappiness and intervene early;
- Develop an Individual Behaviour Plan, tailored to the student’s needs;
- Monitor wider classroom/playground behaviour carefully for potential areas of conflict;

2. De-escalation techniques: alternatives to physically restraining a student must be used wherever possible and in circumstances that do not involve imminent danger.

Consider the following (in no particular order):

- A. Safety first – create space and time;
- B. Remove the audience – ask other students to take their work and move away;
- C. Give the student physical space;
- D. Name the emotion in a calm even voice: “You look really angry”, “I can see that you are very frustrated”;
- E. Wait;
- F. Communicate calmly; Talk quietly, even when the student is loud; Focus on communicating respect and your desire to help; Keep verbal interactions respectful;
- G. Remain calm and respectful; Monitor your own body language and allow the student the opportunity to move out of the situation with dignity. Monitor your own emotions and remove yourself from the situation with dignity.
- H. Seek support from a colleague. Eg Send a ‘red card’ signalling there is an incident so another adult is aware of the situation and can provide back-up if needed.
- I. When appropriate, give the student clear choices and/or directions to help them feel more secure and regain control;
- J. Think ahead in case the situation escalates; if escalation occurs, move further away;
- K. Make sure you have an exit plan;
- L. Constantly reassess the situation;
- M. Send for help if necessary.

The following actions may escalate the behaviour and should be avoided:

- Threatening the student;
- Arguing or interrupting;
- Contradicting what the student says – even if they are wrong;
- Challenging the student;
- Trying to shame the student or showing disrespect for the student.

3. Physical Restraint: Although staff should use their judgment to decide when physical restraint is warranted, and respond only proportionately to the level of risk, physical restraint should be a last resort that should only be used in extreme circumstances if and when:

- A. the student’s behaviour poses an imminent danger of physical injury to other students, staff, themselves or others;
- B. preventative and de-escalation techniques have been used;
- C. and there is clear and justifiable reason in the particular circumstances.

Any use of physical restraint must:

- D. use the minimum force necessary to respond to the risk of imminent danger;
- E. and be used only for as long as is needed to prevent the imminent danger of physical injury and ensure the safety of everyone involved. In some circumstances, staff may need to physically help students.

Staff need to use their judgement to decide when physical restraint is warranted, and respond only proportionately to the level of risk.

4. After any incident involving physical restraint:

- A. check the staff member and the student regularly to ensure they are not in shock; support them as necessary;
- B. ensure the parents or caregivers of the student are told as soon as possible after the incident, so they can monitor the student's wellbeing at home;
- C. reflect formally on why the incident occurred that resulted in the student being restrained.

Procedure:

- Write up every incident of physical restraint in an incident report. Have the staff members involved in the physical restraint sign the report, as well as the Principal. Keep a formal record on file, and make it available to the student's teacher and parents/caregivers. The SLT and/or SENCO are responsible for ensuring an incident report is completed within three days of an incident.
- Review the Individual Behaviour Plan and the physical restraint processes followed in the incident. In the updated plan, identify ways to prevent the need to use physical restraint in the future. Incorporate into the plan the suggestions of parents or caregivers and, if appropriate, the student. If a behaviour specialist from the Ministry or RTLB service is supporting the team around the student, involve them in the review of the plan.
- Consider what might have prevented the incident, and what might need to change to minimise the likelihood of it happening again. Consider whether all preventative and de-escalation strategies were used according to any Individual Behaviour Plan, the provisions set out in the policy and whether the restraint used was safe.
- Undertake a debriefing session. In the debriefing, focus on the incident, the lead-up to it, the different interventions used that were unsuccessful in de-escalating the behaviour, and what could have been done differently. If Ministry or RTLB practitioners are part of the student's team, they should be involved in the debriefing process. If the police were involved in the incident, they should be invited to participate in the debriefing session. Write notes from the debrief along with next steps or actions.
- Offer the parents or caregivers a separate debriefing as soon as practically possible, preferably within three days of the incident. At this meeting, give them the opportunity to discuss the incident. Invite them to become active partners in exploring alternatives to restraint. If appropriate, involve the student in this debriefing session.
- Principal to report the incident to the Board Chair at the earliest available opportunity. Unless it should be reported sooner, information on physical restraint must be shared with the Board of Trustees via the regular Principal's report at Board meetings. Write notes from the debriefings along with next steps or actions.
- If physical restraint has been used, schools are encouraged to contact the Ministry of Education for advice and support.
- Ensure that this policy and Procedures for Reporting Abuse form part of the initial staff induction programme for each staff member.

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Supporting Documents

- [Reporting template for physical restraint \(MOE\)](#)
- [Guidelines for Registered Schools in New Zealand on the Use of Physical Restraint AUGUST 2017](#)
- [Promoting Positive Behaviour - part 1](#) (Behaviour management procedures)
- [Promoting Positive Behaviour - parts 2-4. Guidelines for managing challenging behaviours](#) (Behaviour management procedures)
- [Teaching for Positive Behaviour \(December 2017\)](#)
- [Information Sheets - encouraging positive behaviours](#)