

5.3C PHYSICAL RESTRAINT

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.

Principle 1: Physical restraint is a serious intervention. These guidelines aim to minimise the use of physical restraint.

Principle 2: If there is an alternative to physically restraining a student, use the alternative.

Principle 3: All schools are required to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students and staff. Parents, students and the public have a legitimate expectation that the school environment will be a safe environment that supports learning.

Principle 4: The Education Act 1989 provides for the circumstances when teachers and authorised staff members may physically restrain a student. In exercising these powers, teachers and authorised staff members must act reasonably and proportionately in the circumstances to achieve a safe environment for students and staff.

Principle 5: Students' rights are protected under the Bill of Rights Act 1990.

Guidelines

Preventative Techniques:

1. This is about relationship building, and is particularly important for students who regularly present with high risk behaviours.
2. Attempt to understand the student and try to learn the signs of stress or unhappiness.
3. Respect the student by:
 - a. demonstrating that you are there to help;
 - b. being reasonable;
 - c. providing choices and compromise while maintaining authority.
4. Preserve the student's dignity. This may mean dealing with things in private. Do not mock or treat the matter lightly.

De-escalation Techniques:

1. Create space and time:
 - a. remove the audience;
 - b. provide physical space;
 - c. name the emotion calmly (e.g. "I can see that you are very frustrated");
 - d. wait.
2. Communicate calmly and quietly (even when the student is loud).
3. Monitor your own body language and provide opportunity for the student to move out of the situation with dignity.
4. When appropriate, give the student clear choices and/or directions, to help them feel more secure and regain control.
5. If escalation occurs move further away, have an exit plan and send for help if necessary.

What may escalate the behaviour?

1. Threatening the student.
2. Arguing or interrupting.
3. Contradicting what the student says – even if they are wrong.
4. Challenging the student.
5. Trying to shame the student.

Use physical restraint only when:

1. There is 'imminent danger of physical injury.' This can be to the student themselves or others.
2. Preventative and de-escalation techniques have not reduced the risk of injury.
3. Match the physical restraint to the situation:
4. Use only where justifiable.
5. Use the minimum force necessary.
6. Use only for as long as is necessary.

Examples of "imminent danger":

1. A student moving in with a weapon or something being used as a weapon with a clear intent to harm another person.
2. A student physically attacking another person, or is about to.
3. A student throwing furniture (for example), throwing equipment, breaking glass close to others.
4. A student putting themselves in danger e.g. running on the road, or trying to harm themselves.

Examples which do not represent "imminent danger":

1. Refusal behaviours.
2. Disruptive behaviour that does not put another person in danger of being hurt.
3. Verbal threats.
4. Defiant behaviour.
5. A student wanting to leave the classroom without permission.
6. A student damaging property, unless this could cause injury.

Guidance if you have to use physical restraint:

1. Ideally, physical restraint should only be used by staff trained in its safe use, and trained in emergency first aid.
2. 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.
3. If you do not have the skills or confidence, remove the other students and call for help.
4. 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:

1. Any restraint that inhibits breathing.
2. 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.
3. Prone (face-down) physical restraint.
4. Pressure points and pain holds.
5. Tackling, sitting, lying or kneeling on a student.
6. Pressure on the chest or neck.
7. Hyperextension (bending back) of joints.
8. Headlocks.
9. Using force to take/drag a student, who is resisting, to another location.
10. 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:

1. Monitor continuously while applying the restraint, and stop as soon as the danger has passed.
2. 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:

1. 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 may do this on your behalf.

On the same day:

1. Fill out a Physical Restraint Incident Report, discuss this with the Principal, and file a copy with the Principal.
2. The Principal is to contact the parents.

Within two school days of the incident:

1. Hold a formal staff debriefing of the incident. Involve any Ministry of Education or RTLB practitioners if they are part of the student's team. Involve the Police if they were called to the incident.
2. Hold a formal debriefing with the Parents (or caregivers) and the student.
3. The principal is to decide if the Ministry of Education need to be advised and asked for support and assistance.

Individual Behaviour Plan:

1. If the student is on an Individual Behaviour Plan, or it is felt that one is required, then arrange a meeting with all stakeholders to attend to this, as soon as possible.

Complaint:

1. 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.
2. This is on display on the school's website and is available upon enquiry at the office.

5.3Ci REPORTING TEMPLATES FOR PHYSICAL RESTRAINT

Behaviour directed at	
Staff member – name	
Student – name	
Self – describe how they intended self-harm	
Property – describe potential injury to self or others	

Reason restraint was considered necessary	
Imminent danger, serious risk of injury – describe	
Actual injury – describe and attach injury form	

Please turn over and complete the reflection section.

Reflection

Events leading to the incident

Describe what was happening before the behaviour started to escalate. What was the student doing? What do you think might have triggered the behaviour? How were other students reacting to the student?

Behaviour of the student

What did you notice about the student's behaviour that alerted you that they were struggling to cope? Think about the way they looked, for example facial expressions, physical signs, language.

What did you try before the restraint?

Describe the alternative techniques and interventions tried to prevent the emergency, including a description of the de-escalation strategies you used. What was the response from the student?

The restraint method used

Describe the nature of the physical restraint. Include the type of hold and number of people required.

Monitoring

Describe how the student's physical and emotional distress was monitored while they were restrained.

After the restraint ended

Describe the mood of the student following the restraint. What help and support were they offered?

If there's a next time

What could be done differently in the future to prevent the need for restraint?

How about you?

How are you feeling and what support do you need?

Signature of person who applied the restraint

Signatures of any staff witnesses

Debriefing form for staff involved in physical restraint incident

Date of incident		
Date of debriefing		Time of debriefing
Names of the people at the debriefing		
Findings of debriefing		
Next steps/actions		
Principal or Principal's delegate signature		

Physical restraint debriefing form – parents or caregivers, student

Date of incident		
Date of debriefing		Time of debriefing
Names of the people at the debriefing		
Findings of debriefing		
Parent or caregiver – comments and suggestions		
Student – comments and suggestions		
Next steps/actions agreed		
Signatures		
Principal or Principal's delegate:		
Parents or caregivers:		
Student:		