

Policy: Health Safety / Physical Restraint

Policy Statement

The use of physical restraint affects the wellbeing of both the student and the staff member who uses it. In cases where physical restraint is appropriate, this will be carried out in accordance with legal requirements.

Procedures for using Physical Restraint

Guiding Principles

Manurewa High School adheres to the principles outlined by the Ministry of Education with regard to physical restraint:

- Physical restraint is a serious intervention.
- If there is an alternative to physically restraining a student, it should be used.
- All schools are required to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students and staff.
- The Education Act 1989 provides for the circumstances when teachers and authorized staff members may physically restrain a student.
- Students' rights are protected under the Bill of Rights Act 1990

Physical Restraint

Physical restraint is the use of physical force by a teacher or authorized staff member to prevent, restrict, or subdue the movement of a student's body or part of a student's body.

Physical restraint of a student can be used in situations where the teacher or authorized staff member reasonably believes that the safety of the student or of any other person is at serious and imminent risk, and the restraint used is reasonable and proportionate given the circumstances.

Note that the use of seclusion in schools is banned under the Act.

Identifying when you may need to use physical restraint

The use of physical restraint should be avoided if possible and preventative and de-escalation techniques used first.

Preventative techniques include:

- Knowing the student sufficiently to be able to identify potentially difficult times/ situations that may be stressful for them and intervening early.
- Monitoring wider classroom / playground behaviour carefully for potential areas of conflict.
- Respect for the student – approaching the student in a supportive way (for example, saying to the student “I am here to help”), being flexible in your own responses to adapt what you are doing to the demands of the situation, setting a reasonable request or expectation of the student as this deserves a reasonable response, promoting and accepting compromise while maintaining authority, and taking the student seriously, addressing the issue quickly.
- Preserve the student's dignity – address private or sensitive issues in a quiet space, and avoid the use of sarcasm or mocking.
- There are things that may escalate the behaviour and we want to avoid this, for example, threatening the student, arguing or interrupting the student, do not contradict the student even if they are wrong, and challenging the student or shaming or disrespecting the student.

De – escalation techniques include:

- Send for a member of the SLT team to help with the situation by sending a student to the main reception to ask for a member of the SLT. In addition, get a student to ask for a teacher in a classroom nearby to come in and help.
- Try to think ahead in case the situation escalates – give the student more physical space, make sure you have an exit plan, constantly reassess the situation (for example, make sure you give yourself time to respond to the student, and time to think about what is happening).

- Safety first – remove the audience or remove the student from the audience (tell students to move to a different space even if this means they take their work with them if the incident happens during class time), give the student physical space, name the emotion that you are seeing (for example, “you look really angry”, or “I can see that you are really frustrated”), and most importantly, wait. If you are out on the field and need to walk a student to the SLT corridor, do not walk them through the middle of the school, but instead use the footpath and go around to the front reception. Do not talk to the student about what has happened as you move them through the school.
- Communicate in a calm manner – talk quietly, try to remain calm and respectful, focus on communicating respect and your desire to help, keep verbal interactions respectful, if appropriate give the student clear choice and or directions to help them feel safe, and allow the student the opportunity to move out of the situation with dignity. Do not confront the student.

Use physical restraint only where safety is at a serious and imminent risk, in situations such as for example:

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

In situations where safety is serious and there is an imminent risk, the use of physical restraint must be proportionate; only use the minimum amount of force necessary to respond to the situation and use physical restraint only for as long as is needed to ensure the safety of everyone involved.

The following restraints may not be used:

- A restraint that inhibits the student’s breathing, speaking or main method of communication (for example, those who communicate through sign language).
- Prone (face- down) physical restraint, pressure points and pain holds.
- Tackling, sitting, lying or kneeling on a student
- Pressure on chest or neck
- Hyperextension of joints
- Headlocks
- Using force to drag a student who is resisting
- Restraint when moving a student from one place to another – trying to get them into a van or taxi when there are in an escalated state, as this may make things worse.

Example where behaviour does not pose a serious or imminent risk to safety and where physical restraint should not be used:

- Disruptive classroom behaviour that is disrupting the classroom or not putting anyone in danger of being hurt.
- Refusal to comply with an adult’s request.
- Responding to verbal threats.
- Stopping a student from leaving a classroom or school without permission.
- To coerce, discipline, or punish a student.
- Stopping a student from damaging or removing property, unless there is a risk to safety.

Wellbeing

It is imperative that the well-being of the student who is being restrained is monitored by the person performing the restraint and other adults present. The restraint may be applied for the minimum time needed and must stop as soon as the danger has passed.

The well-being (Physical and psychological) of the student and the staff member who applied the restraint must be monitored for the rest of the school day. Staff, Specifically the school nurse, should watch the student for signs of shock, possible unnoticed injury and delayed effects. The guidance team should be informed of the incident by a member of the SLT.

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