

MANUREWA CENTRAL SCHOOL
Reducing Student Distress and Use of Physical Restraint
Policy

PURPOSE

To provide a safe physical and emotional environment where all students and staff are safe from harm and treated with dignity. Manurewa Central School Board shall ensure that effective procedures are in place to reduce student distress. Physical restraint is a serious intervention and a last resort. In all cases, an alternative must be used where possible. Physical restraint can only be used under The Education and Training (2020) Act when:

- The teacher or authorised staff member reasonably believes that physical restraint is necessary to prevent imminent harm to the student or another person
- There is reasonable belief that no other option is available: and
- The restraint used is reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances

DEFINITIONS

As defined in the Education and Training Act 2020:

Physical restraint is using physical force to prevent, restrict or subdue the movement of a student's body or part of the student's body against the student's will.

Imminent Harm means an immediate threat that a person will cause and/or suffer harm which jeopardises the health and safety or wellbeing of themselves or others if protective action is not taken immediately.

Significant emotional distress means harm that is caused by the intentional acts of one person that significantly affects the emotional wellbeing of another person, to such an extent that they need intensive support to cope or recover.

Authorised staff member means an employee of a registered school who is trained and authorised by the employer to use physical restraint in accordance with Section 99 of the Act.

Corporal punishment and seclusion of students is prohibited. Seclusion is defined as placing a child or student in a room involuntarily, alone and from which they cannot (or believe they cannot) freely exit.

SCOPING

All staff subject to this policy are trained to confidently apply prevention and de-escalation strategies, limiting the need to restrain a student physically according to the [The Ministry of Education's Physical Restraint Guidelines, Dec 2024](#) and Appendix 1 of the [Rules](#)

This policy applies throughout the school. Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure parents, students, school staff and the community know about the school's policy and procedures for reducing student distress and using physical restraint.

Complainants with concerns regarding use of physical restraint must follow the school's prescribed concerns and complaints procedure.

The Board requires:

- Compliance with the 2024 Rules, and
- An evidence based assurance from their principal that this policy is being followed.

DELEGATIONS

The School Board delegates to the principal:

- Operational compliance with the Education and Training Act 2020 and the 2024 Rules.
- Responsibility for ensuring that adequate staff training and support is in place, for authorised personnel, by developing and implementing procedures and practice to prevent, plan for, and respond to student distress that meets the requirements of the Education (Physical Restraint) Rules 2024.
- Recommendation of authorisation for non-teaching staff member(s) to use physical restraint as part of a support plan. This is given in writing and may be revoked in writing at any time by the Board. All non-teaching staff who may use physical restraint on a student have undertaken appropriate training as required by Rule 12.
- Monitoring and reporting of incidents of physical restraint to parents, caregivers and the Ministry of Education. All physical restraint incidents are immediately reported at the next Board meeting.
- Notification to parents and caregivers if an element of physical restraint is deemed appropriate in a student's individual behaviour plan, and obtaining written parental consent prior to its inclusion in a support plan.
- Responsibility, in the first instance, for analysing records of physical restraint to identify and rectify any undesirable trends.
- Responsibility for ensuring development of appropriate responses to minimise the use of restraint.

PROCEDURES

Prior to the need for restraint, de-escalation strategies must be used to help defuse the situation.

Procedures for reducing and de-escalating student distress:

- Preventative and de-escalation techniques can be used by all staff members. It is important to build rapid rapport and connection by using verbal and non-verbal techniques, and by paying attention to your own emotional responses.
- De-escalation techniques include:

- Creating space and time by removing other students from the classroom/pod, giving the student physical space, and naming the emotion in a calm even voice, 'I can see that you are very frustrated...', using wait time
- Communicating calmly: talk quietly (even when the student is loud), remain calm and respectful, monitor your own body language and allow the student time to move out of the situation with dignity, focus on communicating respect and your desire to help, keep verbal interaction respectful, when appropriate give the student clear choices and/or directions to help them feel more secure and regain control.
- Create space and use silence and non-action as an opportunity for student to gather their thoughts, you to pause, observe, and prepare for any further action that may be needed.
- Think ahead in case the situation escalates: move further away, make sure you have an exit plan, constantly reassess the situation, send for help if necessary. Keep everyone safe.
- Be aware that doing the following 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 or showing them disrespect.

Procedures for the use of physical restraint

- Never use physical restraint that:
 - Inhibits a student's breathing, speaking, or method of communication (example sign language)
 - Places a student prone (face-down)
 - Uses pressure points or pain holds
 - Uses tackling, sitting, lying or kneeling on a student
 - Pressure on chest or neck
 - Hyperextension (bending back of joints)
 - Headlocks
 - Uses force to drag or take a resisting student to another location
- Monitor well-being throughout the application of physical restraint both physically and emotionally for both student and staff member for the rest of the school day, even after the situation has de-escalated. Watch for shock, possible unnoticed injury and delayed effects.
- Debrief with school leaders and colleagues after giving time and space to calm down and reflect. Reflect on your own response, the help you need, what worked, what didn't and what you would do differently next time. Reflect as a team on how the

school's policies and practices supported the situation. Reflect on any environmental factors that could be improved.

- Notify parents or caregivers the same day the incident occurred so they can monitor the student's wellbeing at home. Offer an opportunity for parents and caregivers to debrief and the timeline for these actions to happen (must be within 3 working days, or later by mutual arrangement).
- For good practice following an incident follow the debriefing guide found in the 2024 *Guidelines for Registered Schools in New Zealand on the Use of Physical Restraint*.
- Schools must notify the Ministry of Education when physical restraint has been used using the online reporting templates including relevant physical restraint forms as provided in the Education (Physical Restraint) Rules 2024. The copy of the notification must be kept secure as per the Privacy Act 2020 and the Official Information Act 1982.
- The Board is notified at the next Board meeting.

MONITORING

- Reporting to the School Board on compliance, or the actions being taken to ensure compliance with this policy, the legislation, and the 2024 Rules on reducing student distress and use of physical restraint will form part of the Principal's report ensuring the non-identification and privacy of individual students is maintained.
- Principal will advise the Presiding Member within 24 hours of any case where physical restraint has occurred.
- The Board shall monitor the use of physical restraint, looking for trends and any action that could be taken at governance level to support reducing such incidents.
- Records of physical restraint to be kept for 10 years.
- Policy will be reviewed annually.

KEY RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

[Education and Training Act 2020 \(Sections 99 - 101\)](#)

[Education \(Physical Restraint\) Rules 2024](#)

[Physical Restraint Guidelines \(Gazette notice, 17 December 2024\)](#)

[Health and Safety at Work Act 2015](#)

Health and Safety Policy

Child Protection Policy

Privacy Policy

Concerns and Complaints Policy and Procedures

Emergency Procedures - Harrison Tew

Reviewed: June 2025

Presiding Member:



Next Review June 2027

Principal:

