



ST THOMAS'S  
SCHOOL

# Reducing Student Distress and Use of Physical Restraint

## Rationale

The Board is committed to a supportive and caring school environment where all students and staff are kept safe from harm and treated with dignity.

Except as authorised under this policy, no staff member may use any form of physical restraint on our students.

Our Principal, teachers, and board-authorized staff members can only physically restrain a student as a last resort, where:

1. the use of physical restraint is necessary to prevent imminent harm to the student or another person,
2. there is a reasonable belief that there is no other option available in the circumstances to prevent the harm, and
3. the physical restraint is reasonable and proportionate to the circumstances.

## Delegations

The Board delegates to the Principal responsibility for:

- developing and implementing procedures and practices to prevent, plan for, and respond to student distress that meet the requirements of the [Education \(Physical Restraint\) Rules 2023](#) and its amendments ("the 2023 Rules"), and
- recommending eligible non-teaching staff to the Board for authorisation to use physical restraint according to requirements of the 2023 Rules.

Only the Board can authorise non-teaching staff members to use physical restraint.

## Expectations

St Thomas's School follows the Chance to Change guidelines for assessment and management of student behaviour. This safeguards the well-being of students, staff, and others whenever behaviour management issues arise.

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 2023 Rules and the relevant guidelines.

If physical restraint is warranted, the level of restraint should be proportional to the level of risk the student or their behaviour poses and should end as soon as the safety of everyone involved is assured. The student's physical and psychological state should be monitored during the restraint. The student, and the person who applied the physical restraint, should be monitored for signs of distress or shock in the aftermath of the incident.

The school holds a debrief after the incident, examining the events leading up to it, the interventions used, and what could have been done differently. The Ministry of Education, and the Board, is notified of any incident involving physical restraint.



## ST THOMAS'S SCHOOL

Parents/caregivers whose child was involved in the incident should be notified as soon as practically possible. They should be invited to offer suggestions to avoid the use of restraint in the management of their child's behaviour. Any complaints from parents should be dealt with through the school's [Concerns and Complaints Process](#), and the Ministry of Education contacted for advice, if necessary.

Students with high-risk behaviours should have an Individual Behaviour Plan in place. Key staff members and parents/caregivers are involved in the development of the plan. All staff working with the particular student are fully briefed on the agreed protocols in the plan, and all staff are made aware that there is an Individual Behaviour Plan in place for the student.

### Board

The Board requires:

- compliance with the 2023 Rules, and
- an evidence-based assurance from their Principal that this policy is being followed.

### Principal

The Principal shall ensure:

- the implementation and compliance of this policy, including the completion of best practice training by all staff who are authorised to use physical restraint,
- operational compliance with the [Education and Training Act 2020](#) and the 2023 Rules,
- all physical restraint incidents are immediately reported at the next Board meeting,
- the Board is informed of all relevant information (risks, trends, and impacts), and
- all non-teaching staff who may use physical restraint on a student have been authorised by the Board.

### Monitoring

The Principal shall report to the Board:

- on compliance, or the actions being taken to ensure compliance with this policy, the legislation, and the 2023 Rules on reducing student distress and use of physical restraint, and
- at every Board meeting, all incidents, matters, or risks relating to this policy, ensuring that the non-identification and privacy of individual students is maintained.

The Board shall monitor the use of physical restraint, looking for trends and any action that could be taken at the governance level to support reducing such incidents.

Definitions	<p>As defined in the Education and Training Act 2020:</p> <p><b>Physical restraint</b> 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.</p> <p><b>Harm</b> means harm to the health, safety, or well-being of the student or another person, including any significant emotional distress suffered by the student or the other person.</p>
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ST THOMAS'S  
SCHOOL

	<b>Authorised staff member</b> 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.
Legislation	<a href="#">Education and Training Act 2020</a> (Sections 99-101)  <a href="#">Education (Physical Restraint) Rules 2023</a>  <a href="#">Health and Safety at Work Act 2015</a>
This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Boards:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Health and safety policy</li><li>• Child protection policy</li><li>• Privacy policy</li><li>• Emergency procedures</li><li>• <a href="#">Reporting to the Board Policy</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Concerns and Complaints Process</a></li></ul>
Procedures/supporting documentation	<a href="#">The Ministry of Education's Physical Restraint Guidelines</a> Appendix 1 of the <a href="#">Rules</a> Suggested procedures/practices that cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the authorisation process</li><li>• reducing and de-escalating student distress</li><li>• training and support for staff</li><li>• notifying and reporting on instances of physical restraint</li><li>• monitoring the use of physical restraint</li></ul>
Forms	<a href="#">Physical Restraint Support Plan</a> <a href="#">Physical Restraint Consent Form</a> <a href="#">Checklist Following an Incident of Physical Restraint</a> <a href="#">Physical Restraint Debrief Form</a> <a href="#">Incident of Physical Restraint Form - Reporting</a>

Ratified by Board

Signed *CA Houker*

Date 15/5/23

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Reviewed: March 2023

Next Review: March 2026

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