



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.

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

- the use of physical restraint is necessary to prevent imminent harm to the student or another person,
- there is a reasonable belief that there is no other option available in the circumstances to prevent the harm, and
- 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 2024](#) and its amendments ("the 2024 Rules"), and
- recommending eligible non-teaching staff to the Board for authorisation to use physical restraint according to requirements of the 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.

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 key staff are made aware that there is an Individual Behaviour Plan in place for the student.

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 2024 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.



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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.

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](#).

Monitoring

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,
- 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 staff who use physical restraint on a student have completed the required Physical Restraint training.

Board

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>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.</p> <p>Harm 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> <p>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.</p>
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Ratified by Board	
Signed	
Date	27 Feb 2026