



5.08 Minimising Physical Restraint Policy

1. As required by the Education and Training Act 2020 and in support of the National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP), Liston College promotes a schoolwide culture of wellbeing to ensure the school is a physically and emotionally safe place for all students and staff. This includes understanding, recognising, and safely responding to [student distress](#), and minimising the use of physical restraint.
2. The physical restraint rules set out in this policy comply with the [Education \(Physical Restraint\) Rules](#) and the framework for physical restraint set out by the Education and Training Act 2020 (s. 101).
3. This physical restraint policy also aligns with [Aramai He Tētēkura: A guide to understanding distress and minimising the use of physical restraint](#), which provides a practical approach for recognising and understanding student distress, providing [acceptable physical contact](#), and minimising the use of physical restraint in schools. This includes eliminating unjustified physical restraint.
4. We follow Aramai He Tētēkura, which was developed in response to the disproportionate use of physical restraint on Māori, disabled, and younger students. The school complies with these guidelines to give effect to [te Tiriti o Waitangi](#) and its principles, in support of achieving equitable outcomes for all students.
5. For information about how terms in te reo Māori within Aramai He Tētēkura relate to this policy, see this [glossary](#) below under procedures.
6. This policy aligns with physical restraint rules and guidelines, but this information does not equate to the training required to safely use physical restraint. The only people who can use physical restraint at Liston College are teachers and authorised staff (i.e. non-teaching staff that the school has authorised to use physical restraint) who have the relevant training. This training includes the mandatory online learning module (which must be completed by 7 February 2024) and physical holds training.



How we Define and use Physical Restraint at Liston College

What is Physical Restraint?

- Physical restraint, in the context of this policy, means to use physical force to prevent, restrict, or subdue the movement of a student (or any part of their body) against their will.
- In line with Aramai He Tētēkura, teachers and **authorised staff** complete mandatory online modules to understand the physical restraint guidelines and take further approved training modules in identifying stress triggers, understanding unmet needs, and preventing, minimising, and responding to student distress.
- Liston College does not allow seclusion or unsafe physical restraint in response to student distress.

Seclusion:

Seclusion is prohibited under the Education and Training Act 2020 (s. 98) and is defined in Aramai He Tētēkura as putting a student alone in a room or space against their will, which they cannot (or think they cannot) leave.

Unsafe Physical Restraint:

We do not use unsafe physical restraint techniques under any circumstances. Unsafe physical restraint techniques include:

- restraint that restricts breathing or communicating, including speaking and sign language
- face-down restraint
- immobilising through pressure points and pain holds
- actions such as tackling, sitting, lying on, or kneeling on a person
- headlocks or putting pressure on the chest or neck
- bending joints backwards.

When can Physical Restraint be used?

Teachers and authorised staff members may only use physical restraint if all three of these conditions are met, and only as a last resort.

1. If physical restraint is necessary to prevent **imminent harm**, including **significant emotional distress** to a student or another person.
2. If the teacher or authorised staff member reasonably believes there is no other option available in the circumstances for preventing harm.
3. If the physical restraint is reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances. This means only applying as much force as is necessary, and for the minimum amount of time necessary.



Liston College staff take proactive steps to ensure student safety. This may include using physical restraint to prevent harm, for example to stop a student from running onto a road, or coming into contact with a hazardous item.

Physical Restraint Rules

Liston College complies with the following requirements, as set out by the Education (Physical Restraint) Rules. References are provided for how each area relates to an associated rule.

Policy Requirements and Availability to the Community

- We fulfil the requirement to have policies on reducing student distress and the use of physical restraint, and a process for managing complaints (Rule 4).
- Liston College manages all complaints, including those regarding physical restraint, through our [Concerns and Complaints](#) policy. Where necessary, we follow up complaints with the Teaching Council, in accordance with their conduct and competence processes.
- Our policies on reducing student distress and the use of physical restraint are available to the school community, and we are able to provide the names and positions of any staff members who are authorised to use physical restraint, if requested (Rule 6).

Authorisation of Staff Members

- Under the Education and Training Act 2020, teachers, including relief teachers and people with a Limited Authority to Teach (LAT), are automatically authorised to use physical restraint.
- Other staff members, such as teacher aides, must be authorised by the board (Rule 5).

Process for Authorisation

1. The board may authorise a staff member who is not a teacher to use physical restraint after they have completed physical restraint training as set out by Rule 12.
2. The board makes any authorisation as specified above in writing.
3. The staff member receives a copy of the authorisation.
4. The board may revoke an authorisation at any time in writing.

Individual Support Plans

We have support plans in place for specific students to prevent distress and de-escalate crisis situations. See [Reducing Student Distress](#) for information about creating individual support plans.

We ensure we have support plans for students who meet any of the following criteria:

1. The student is highly likely to be involved in a situation where physical restraint may be used



2. The student has been physically restrained more than once in a term
3. A support plan is requested for a student by their parents/caregivers.

We do not include physical restraint in a support plan unless all other possible strategies have been explored. Liston College requires [informed consent](#) from parents/caregivers and whānau if physical restraint is included in a support plan (Rule 8). We monitor the frequency of physical restraint with the intention to minimise and, where possible, eliminate its use. The school notifies the Ministry of Education if physical restraint is part of a support plan.

Notifying the Use of Physical Restraint

After a situation involving physical restraint, we notify the following parties (Rule 9):

1. Staff inform the principal (or their delegate) as soon as possible in order to support students, other staff, and anyone affected by the situation.
2. The school notifies parents/caregivers as soon as possible after physical restraint has been used (at minimum before the student is returned to their care). Parents/Caregivers are provided with a reasonable opportunity to actively participate in a debrief about the incident, including how it was managed with regard to the guidelines, within three working days of the incident (or later by mutual agreement).
3. The school notifies the Ministry of Education through the online incident reporting form or our student management system. We keep a secure copy of the notification, in line with the Privacy Act 2020 and the Official Information Act 1982.
4. The Principal reports the use of physical restraint and analysis of physical restraint trends to the board.

If the Principal considers that use of physical restraint was unjustified, they are responsible for following up with the board and subsequent reporting to the Teaching Council.

Recording and Monitoring Physical Restraint

Liston College monitors our use of physical restraint and complies with record keeping requirements. We keep written records of every instance of physical restraint of a student. We keep records for a minimum of 10 years from the date of last action (Rule 7).

We take reasonable steps to ensure that any student who has been physically restrained and any staff member who has used physical restraint has their physical and psychological wellbeing monitored, so that appropriate support can be provided if there are adverse effects from the use of physical restraint.

We check for trends by monitoring and analysing records, particularly the increased use of physical restraint. If the trend shows increased use, we consider how to minimise use of restraint (Rule 10).



Reporting Physical Restraint

Staff involved in an incident of physical restraint complete an incident report. The incident report and any other required information is submitted to the Ministry of Education through the Community Portal.

We keep a copy of the physical restraint incident report in the student file, and provide a copy to parents/caregivers of the student (Rule 11).

Staff Training and Support

The board is responsible for ensuring (Rule 12):

- From 7 February 2024, teachers and authorised staff members have completed the online learning module about the physical restraint guidelines (Aramai He Tētēkura)
- From 7 February 2025, teachers and authorised staff members are supported and trained in identifying stress triggers, understanding unmet needs, and preventing, minimising, and responding to student distress
- Teachers with a high likelihood of needing to use physical restraint are trained in appropriate physical holds by accredited physical restraint practitioners
- Every authorised staff member (who is not a teacher) has been trained in appropriate physical holds by accredited physical restraint practitioners before their authorisation.

The Principal assures the board that all procedures relating to physical restraint have been followed, and that all requirements to notify, monitor, and report have been met. The Principal confirms that any non-teaching staff have been authorised in writing, and that staff authorised to apply restraint have received appropriate training and support. See [Self-Review and Board Assurances](#).

Related topics

- [Te Tiriti o Waitangi](#)
- [Concerns and Complaints](#)
- [Behaviour Management](#)
- [Child Protection](#)
- [Risk Management](#)

Legislation

- Education and Training Act 2020
- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015
- Privacy Act 2020
- Official Information Act 1982
- Teaching Council Rules 2016



Resources

- Ministry of Education | Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga:
- [Education \(Physical Restraint\) Rules](#)
- [Aramai He Tētēkura: A guide to understanding distress and minimising the use of physical restraint](#)

Adopted by Board of Trustees

Review Date: 24-JUL-2024 Chairperson: 

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5.08 Minimising Physical Restraint Procedures

Reducing Student Distress

Liston College is committed to the physical and emotional safety of every student, as required by the Education and Training Act 2020.

We recognise that school and classroom environments can contribute to [student distress](#), and we seek to respond in helpful and safe ways. We use proactive, mana-enhancing teaching and learning practices that support participation, belonging, and wellbeing for all students.

Liston College follows [Aramai He Tētēkura: A guide to understanding distress and minimising the use of physical restraint](#), which provides a practical approach to recognising and responding to student distress, as well as restoring a healthy learning environment after a challenging situation.

The approach to student distress within these guidelines is defined by **mātaitia**, **atawhaitia**, and **whakawhenuatia** – to recognise, respond, and restore.

For more information about how terms in te reo Māori within **Aramai He Tētēkura** relate to this policy, see this [glossary](#) below.

Mātaitia | Recognise

We work with students and their parents/caregivers and whānau to recognise signs that a student is becoming overwhelmed or struggling and find ways of responding that are helpful and appropriate to the student.

School staff are alert to signs of student distress, including:

- disengaging from school activities or interactions
- making noises, speaking quickly, or repeating other people's words
- agitated physical actions (e.g. rocking, pacing, clenching fists).

Individual support plans

Liston College uses support plans for students as needed to maintain safe and inclusive learning environments that respect the mana of all students. We use support plans to describe and understand triggers for individual students that may result in them experiencing distress.

We ensure any plan is appropriate to the student and their parents/caregivers and whānau.

We work with students and their parents/caregivers and whānau to:

- clarify priorities for the student
- agree on shared protocols (including for communication)
- create a shared understanding of privacy requirements
- share details of any available support.

See [Aramai He Tētēkura](#) for strategies to recognise and respond to student distress that may be included in a support plan.

A support plan may identify [physical restraint](#) as a last resort. We do not include physical restraint in a support plan unless all other possible strategies have been explored.



Liston College requires [informed consent](#) from parents/caregivers and whānau if physical restraint is included in a support plan. The school notifies the Ministry of Education if physical restraint is part of a support plan.

We monitor the frequency of physical restraint with the intention to minimise and, where possible, eliminate its use.

Atawhaitia | Respond

In situations where it appears a student is overwhelmed or not coping, we maintain awareness of our own response, and take a calm approach.

This may include:

- using slow, clear action and communication
- being mindful of body language (e.g. approaching from the side instead of the front, using appropriate eye contact)
- moving other students out of the space and seeking extra support. If the situation continues to escalate, we take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of all students and staff.

This may include:

- removing potentially dangerous items
- responding to threats using our [emergency management plan](#)
- calling the police if necessary.

In situations of student distress, Liston College teachers or authorised staff may only use physical restraint if all three of these conditions are met, and only as a last resort.

1. If physical restraint is necessary to prevent [imminent harm](#), including [significant emotional distress](#) to the student or another person.
2. If the teacher or authorised staff member reasonably believes there is no other option available in the circumstances for preventing harm.
3. If the physical restraint is reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances. This means only applying as much force as is necessary, and for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Notifying the use of physical restraint

If a situation occurs involving physical restraint, we notify the following parties:

- Staff inform the principal (or their delegate) as soon as possible in order to support students, other staff, and anyone affected by the situation.
- The school notifies parents/caregivers as soon as possible after physical restraint has been used (at minimum before the student is returned to their care). Parents/Caregivers are provided with a reasonable opportunity to actively participate in a debrief about the incident, including how it was managed with regard to the guidelines, within three working days of the incident (or later by mutual agreement).
- The school notifies the Ministry of Education through the online incident reporting form or our student management system. We keep a secure copy of the notification, in line with the Privacy Act 2020 and the Official Information Act 1982.
- If the principal considers that the use of restraint was unjustified, they are responsible for following up with the board and subsequent reporting to the Teaching Council.
- The principal notifies the board of physical restraint, and reports on any trends of



physical restraint use at the school.

Whakawhenuatia | Restore

After a challenging incident or a situation involving physical restraint, we take restorative action to support and monitor the wellbeing of anyone affected by the situation. Following an incident, we refer to strategies within individual support plans, and support all students to re-engage with classroom activities.

As recommended by Aramai He Tētēkura, staff involved in a challenging incident take the following steps:

- Inform a colleague, senior staff member, or the principal, and decide together on next steps and any support needed.
- Share information with parents/caregivers and whānau, and follow up on an existing support plan or consider if one is needed.
- Take time to reflect individually, debrief with other relevant staff members, and reflect as a team on any further action that is needed.

Monitoring student wellbeing

We monitor student wellbeing by watching for signs of ongoing distress, such as absences from usual activities, or changes in their interactions with other students and staff. We respond to concerns raised by other members of the school community, including students.

Monitoring staff wellbeing

We ensure that affected staff receive appropriate support. This may include debriefing, emotional support, an employee assistance programme, additional breaks, or help with workload.

Related topics

- [Behaviour Management](#)
- [Child Protection](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Safety](#)
- [Staff Wellbeing and Safety Legislation](#)
- Education and Training Act 2020

Resources

- Ministry of Education | Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga:
 - [Education \(Physical Restraint\) Rules](#)
 - [Aramai He Tētēkura: A guide to understanding distress and minimising the use of physical restraint](#)
 - [Minimising physical restraint in New Zealand schools and kura](#)



Acceptable Physical Contact

At Liston College, we recognise that acceptable and appropriate physical contact contributes to student safety and wellbeing. In support of the National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP), we ensure that the school is a safe and inclusive place of learning for all students, and seek to recognise and respond to student needs.

We consider physical contact acceptable if:

- the student is willing to receive physical contact
- it is for the benefit of the student
- it is limited to appropriate areas of the body.

Appropriate areas are generally considered the shoulders, arms, hands, and upper back. Exceptions to this may include professionally or medically prescribed positioning techniques.

We consider the benefit to students of using physical contact compared with non-physical interactions, such as using affirmative gestures or words, and make informed decisions about whether contact is [appropriate to the situation](#).

In making decisions about physical contact, staff also consider the background and needs of individual students. This includes the physical capabilities of the student and their cultural preferences.

Assessing if physical contact is acceptable

In circumstances where physical contact may be appropriate, staff look for signs that the student is willing to receive physical contact, such as an affirmative facial expression or movement toward the staff member.

We do not use physical contact if the student does not seem willing to receive physical contact (e.g. shaking their head or hesitating/retreating).

Purposes of acceptable physical contact

Physical contact may be used at Liston College for the following purposes:

- Developing skills (e.g. demonstrating a technique or safe way to perform a task during physical education).
- Providing emotional support (e.g. to give reassurance, reduce distress, or acknowledge an achievement).
- Supporting communication (e.g. physically guiding a student to turn on their communication device).
- Providing help to students, particularly if it is part of their required medical or personal care. This may be for functional mobility and positioning, hygiene, nutrition, and/or safety. Assistance may also include using aids and equipment intended to safely move or transport students (e.g. hoists, transfer boards, and car seats).



Unacceptable physical contact

Liston College is responsible for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our students, and does not allow unacceptable physical contact.

We respond to incidents involving unacceptable physical contact using our [Concerns and Complaints](#) policy, and report serious misconduct by teaching staff to the Teaching Council.

Contact may be considered unacceptable due to:

- the type of physical contact (e.g. inappropriate contact areas, force, or physical discipline)
- the motive for physical contact (e.g. contact for the physical or emotional benefit of a staff member)
- the context or environment of physical contact.

Staff do not engage in any physical contact while alone with students in a space that is not accessible to other people (e.g. in a room with the door closed).

Responding to inappropriate physical contact from students

Liston College staff enforce boundaries for physical contact where required and use techniques such as redirection to promote appropriate interactions. We encourage staff to consider how non-physical interactions may be used, and how individual interactions affect other students in the learning environment.

We support staff to seek guidance from other colleagues and the principal if they are uncertain about the appropriateness of physical contact. We may consult parents/caregivers as necessary to support the safety and wellbeing of students.

Related topics

- [Child Protection](#)
- [Staff Conduct](#)
- [Supporting Student Wellbeing](#)

Resources

- Ministry of Education | Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga: [Aramai He Tētēkura: A guide to understanding distress and minimising the use of physical restraint](#)



Glossary:

-[Aramai He Tētēkura](#) includes the following terms in te reo Māori.

This glossary describes how te reo terms within the guidelines relate to this policy.

Te reo Māori	English
ākonga	student
kaiako	teacher
tamariki	children
whānau	extended family or family group
mana	intrinsic value and potential passed down inherently through whakapapa
whakapapa	genealogical connections to people, places, and cultural values