# Arc Digital Hub: Learn about the Restraint and Seclusion Policy – participant questions

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## Participant questions – 29 March 2023

### Seclusion related questions

For more information: [Restraint and Seclusion Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-seclusion/policy)

#### If a student chooses to isolate themself, is this seclusion?

No (assuming if a student can get into a place of isolation they can also get out of the same place).

#### Is locking gates in a school perimeter regarded as seclusion?

This is unlikely to constitute seclusion. To meet the threshold for seclusion a student would need to be alone within the school perimeter and unable to get out.

#### Similar scenarios

* A student is restricted to the yard or section of the yard, alone with their exit prevented. This is seclusion. But if a student is alone in the yard and they can get back into buildings or other areas this is not seclusion.
* A student is engaging in behaviours that are dangerous to themselves and others. The room or area is evacuated, and the student is left alone in the room and unable to exit. This is seclusion. But if a student remains alone in the classroom and their movement is not restricted or their exit prevented this is not seclusion.
* A student is in the hallway and doors and exits are blocked to prevent the student leaving the hallway or returning to class. This is seclusion. But if a student is in the hallway and their movement from the hallway is not restricted or their exit not prevented this is not seclusion.
* A student is blocked by a person, barrier, or door from leaving an individual learning space. This is seclusion. But if a student accesses an individual learning space, is supervised, and experiences no restriction of movement this is not seclusion.
* A student is in a planned time out and their movement is blocked to prevent them from leaving time out. This is seclusion. But if a student is asked to move away from a space or area for a period and they have freedom to move into other spaces as needed this is not seclusion.

### Gates, doors, and egress related questions

For more information:

[Locks, coded locks, and door handles guidance (DOCX)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/locks-coded-locks-and-door-handles.docx)

[Essential safety measures and seclusion (DOCX)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/restraint-seclusion-essential-safety-measures-and-seclusion.docx)

[Building Code Vic D2.21 operation of latch statement by school template (DOCX)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/building-code-vic-D2.21-operation-of-latch.docx)

#### Can schools install tall gates with child-proof locking to prevent students absconding?

Relying on a modified physical barrier to prevent a student ‘absconding’ may not be the more effective or efficient response.

There are policy statements that require “principals [to] maintain fencing to ensure safety of students and staff” and “fencing should define school boundaries where outsiders are not permitted and be able to withstand climbing, as well as discourage it”. That said, school staff need to understand why a student is absconding and why the student is engaging in specific behaviour.

Schools are expected to use the guidance on supporting student behaviour available through the Policy Advisory Library (PAL). This advice covers a continuum of levels, beginning with planned preventative actions such as classroom routines and modifications to learning tasks to increase appropriate behaviour, through to responding to challenging behaviour and responding to safety risks. Beyond this, a referral for support dealing with student behaviour to the relevant region may be necessary.

Some questions to ask:

* Have staff collected information about the antecedents and consequences that trigger and maintain the behaviour? Do staff have a hypothesis for why the students are demonstrating this behaviour?
* Are there predictable activities or times of the day that the student is more likely to engage in this behaviour. Common examples can include, when a student is dropped off at school, when a student has specific learning activities they don’t like or find difficult, or when a student is in trouble with staff or peers. Likewise, it can be useful to identify when the behaviour is almost never likely to occur, such as during activities, when with certain friends or at lunch times.
* Are there predictable or consistent consequences that follow the behaviour, common things include avoiding a particular activity or social problem, having a particular staff member engage or follow a student, or the student’s parent/carer arrives at school.
* Is the student able to describe why they are engaging in the behaviour? Do they have the communication skills to request a preferred activity or to take a break from the circumstances that reliably predict the behaviour?
* Has the school tested preventative interventions or made any environmental modifications to support a change in the behaviour of the students?
* Have staff communicated their expectations to the student or made changes to prevent the student accessing the perimeter fence (e.g., planted hedge bushes)? Does the student have access to activities that engage them?
* Has the student been engaged in traffic awareness and road safety training to reduce the risk of an accident? Whilst this does not prevent them from ‘absconding’, it may reduce the risk of harm.

For more information: [Behaviour – Students policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/behaviour-students/policy)

#### Do schools need to amend their doors and locks to comply with the policy?

Principals are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of schools, particularly its safety features. This includes responsibility for ensuring all locks, coded locks and door handles comply with the Building Regulations 2018 (Vic).

Preventing free egress from an area normally used by students with a locking mechanism and doors and door handles installed in such a manner as to prevent a student from leaving the room unassisted are prohibited.

#### Are there circumstances which would permit door handles being placed out of student reach?

No, not out of reach, but some doors may be subject to ‘security locking’ or ‘electronic access control’.

In new schools, major upgrades, special, and special development schools, security locking is required for internal doors where the privacy or security of the room/ space function or the room/ space contents requires protection and access control.

These internal spaces include:

* all private offices, shared staff workrooms, general offices, library workrooms, and interview and conference rooms
* doors that form boundaries to zones that can be isolated for use outside school hours
* secure stores, storage rooms, IT server/ switch/ core communications rooms, ICT technicians’ offices, sports stores, cleaners’ stores, music stores, electrical and mechanical switch rooms, service cupboards, plant rooms, and similar
* room/ spaces where unsupervised access is not permitted (such as rooms containing computers, expensive equipment, music rooms, materials technology rooms, instrument rehearsal rooms, science laboratories and science prep rooms, the gymnasium hall, a theatrette, swimming pool)
* rooms/spaces where in-progress or completed student creative work might need to be secured, excluding classrooms
* the canteen, food storerooms, pantries, and so forth
* rooms/spaces that may contain valuables or controlled substances (for example, the first aid room and chemical storerooms)
* storage cupboards and secure drawers in rooms (keyed identically within a room only).

In addition, in new schools, major upgrades, special schools, and special development schools electronic access control systems can be used to provide entry and exit for all authorised personnel.

#### If there is a staff member in a room with a student but the student cannot reach the door handle, is this seclusion?

To meet the threshold for seclusion a student would need to be alone in the room and unable to get out.

#### Can we lock a door so that a student cannot enter a classroom or building?

The Restraint and Seclusion Policy authorises school staff to use physical restraint and seclusion when reasonable and immediately required to protect the member of staff, the student, or any other person from acts or behaviour that might be dangerous to them. The primary purpose of using physical restraint and seclusion is to prevent harm to a student or someone else.

### Absconding related questions

For more information:

[Students Absconding or Going Missing from School policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/students-absconding/policy)

[Restraint and Seclusion Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-seclusion/policy)

#### Can you stop a student from leaving the school ground if you believe they will be harmed?

Staff should only physically restrain an absconding student in exceptional circumstances where it is immediately required and reasonably necessary to protect the safety of a student or another person.

Staff may only use physical restraint and seclusion where:

* there is an imminent threat of physical harm or danger to a student or others and
* the physical restraint and seclusion are reasonable in all the circumstances and
* there is no less restrictive measure available in the circumstances.

So, physically restraining the student when ‘playing chicken’ with cars would comply with the Restraint and Seclusion policy but physically restraining a student for climbing a fence to abscond may not be compliant.

The ‘Students Absconding or Going Missing from School’ policy says that depending on the individual circumstances of the case, the reasonable steps to be taken may include one or more of the following:

* contacting the Victoria Police to advise them of the missing student and the particular age, disability, vulnerabilities, or mental state of the individual student
* contacting the parent or carer of the student to advise them that the student has left the school grounds or school-approved activity and to obtain any additional information and assistance that may assist in locating the student
* searching for the student, particularly if there is information available as to the student’s potential whereabouts
* following the student and maintaining visual contact until the student returns to school or school-approved activity, or is in the company of the police or their parent or carer
* contacting the student and encouraging them to return to the school grounds or the school approved activity, go to a safe place, stop the behaviour that is putting them at risk, or remain in the company of a suitable and responsible adult.

#### If a prep student decides on the way to Italian class that he wants to run off to visit his sister in another classroom, can you ask him to walk to the Italian class holding your hand?

‘Holding’ is a practice that is without physical force. Holding a student’s hand or placing an arm around the student’s shoulder to provide care, comfort, stability, and guidance is permitted.

Some things to consider:

* If you must enter someone’s personal space to provide care comfort, stability, or guidance, explain your actions so the student understands your actions.
* Be mindful of your gestures, facial expressions, movements, and tone of voice. Keeping your tone and body language neutral will go a long way toward defusing a situation.
* Avoid overreacting. Remain calm, rational, and professional.
* Set limits. Offer concise and respectful choices and consequences.
* Choose wisely what you insist upon. It’s important to be thoughtful in deciding which rules are negotiable and which are not.

### Deep pressure and weighted items related questions

#### Is wrapping a student in a weighted blanket [to apply deep pressure] to help calm the student when he bites/ pinches staff or students permitted restraint?

Apart from deep pressure applied for a therapeutic purpose, prescribed by an occupational therapist, the department does not support the use of deep pressure therapy as its application can pose a risk to the health and safety of students, and alternative interventions that address the function of a student’s behaviour are more effective.

For more information: [Sensory Rooms and Equipment Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/sensory-rooms/policy)

### Physical restraint related questions

#### What is an appropriate way to restrain a student?

The department does not provide training on how to restrain a student.

Physical restraint and seclusion are only permitted within Victorian government schools in exceptional circumstances where it is immediately required and reasonably necessary to protect the safety of a student or another person. Physical restraint and seclusion are not permitted at any other time.

Physical restraint does not include protective physical interventions which use physical contact to block, deflect or redirect a student's actions, or disengage a student's grip, but from which a student can move freely away.

The department provides quality assured and centrally funded protective intervention training through Therapeutic Engagement Support Services (TESSA).

For more information: [Professional development and consultation services (DOCX)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/restraint-seclusion-professional-development-and-consultation-services.docx)

#### If a student causes constant classroom disruption and refuses to leave the classroom, is it okay to carry the student of the classroom?

No. School staff must never use physical restraint and seclusion as behaviour management techniques, for convenience, as retaliation, or to discipline or punish a student.

Physical restraint and seclusion are only permitted within Victorian government schools in exceptional circumstances where it is immediately required and reasonably necessary to protect the safety of a student or another person. Physical restraint and seclusion are not permitted at any other time.

### Reporting related questions

#### Should staff have a discussion with leadership before reporting on eduSafe Plus?

Every instance of physical restraint and seclusion require schools, regions, and central office to undertake specified actions according to the severity rating of the incident.

Staff members involved in the incident must immediately notify the principal or their delegate.

Every incident of physical restraint or seclusion with a ‘low’ or ‘medium’ severity rating must be reported as an incident on eduSafe Plus, the department’s online incident reporting and hazard management system. Every incident of physical restraint and seclusion with a ‘high’ or ‘extreme’ severity rating must be reported to ISOC (on 1800 126 126) who will lodge the eduSafe Plus report.

## Participant questions – 06 June 2023

### Professional development event

#### Are we able to receive a copy of the slides following the presentation?

Yes, they will be published in PAL. Follow this link: [Restraint and Seclusion resources](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-seclusion/resources)

#### Will you be running this PD again so we can invite other staff to attend?

#### Yes: Monday 28 August and Thursday 23 November 2023.

#### How do we get people to sign up to future PDs?

#### To register follow this link: [Arc home page](https://arc.educationapps.vic.gov.au/), search: ‘restraint’.

### Implementation of the policy and guidelines

#### Is there a different policy for students with disability, for example: high functioning nonverbal ASD in mainstream schools?

The Restraint and Seclusion Policy and Guidelines apply to every Victorian government school. Implementation of the Restraint and Seclusion Policy and these Guidelines is the responsibility of every principal.

### Physical restraint

For more information: [Professional development and consultation services (DOCX)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/restraint-seclusion-professional-development-and-consultation-services.docx)

What if a student is attacking a staff member or yourself - how much force can you use to stop them?

Victorian government school staff may only use physical restraint and seclusion where:

* there is an imminent threat of physical harm or danger to a student or others and
* the physical restraint and seclusion are reasonable in all the circumstances and
* there is no less restrictive measure available in the circumstances.

During physical restraint and seclusion incidents, the student/s must be visually monitored for signs of distress and pain to ensure the student’s physical health is not jeopardised and that the student, other students, and staff are safe. Staff must ensure that the use of physical restraint and seclusion is time limited and that it stops as soon as the immediate threat of harm or danger to the student or others has passed.

School staff must never use physical restraint and seclusion as behaviour management techniques, for convenience, as retaliation, or to discipline or punish a student.

Physical restraint must never be used where it has the effect of:

* covering a student’s mouth or nose, or in any way interferes with breathing
* taking a student to the ground into the prone or supine position
* putting stress on a student’s joints
* applying pressure to the neck, back, chest or joints
* deliberately applying pain to gain compliance
* intentionally causing a student to fall
* having a person sitting, lying, or kneeling on a student.

The following behaviours are prohibited:

* headlocks, choke holds, basket holds, bear hugs, ‘therapeutic holding’ or wrestling holds (including 'full or half nelsons')
* using a hog-tied position
* straddling any part of a student's body
* dragging a student along the ground.

A Grade 5 student (larger body) tries to run out on the road and my strength would require holding the student around the body to stop him because holding his arm would just slip out. What are my options if a bear hold is not allowed?

It may be that prevention of this scenario is the best option given the following behaviours are prohibited:

* headlocks, choke holds, basket holds, bear hugs, ‘therapeutic holding’ or wrestling holds (including 'full or half nelsons')
* using a hog-tied position
* straddling any part of a student's body
* dragging a student along the ground.

### Absconding related questions

For more information:

[Students Absconding or Going Missing from School policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/students-absconding/policy)

[Restraint and Seclusion policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-seclusion/policy)

#### What do you do when a primary aged student deliberately leaves the school grounds and will not return?

Depending on the individual circumstances of the case, the reasonable steps to be taken when a student absconds may include one or more of the following:

* contacting the Victoria Police to advise them of the missing student and the age, disability, vulnerabilities, or mental state of the individual student
* contacting the parent or carer of the student to advise them that the student has left the school grounds or school-approved activity and to obtain any additional information and assistance that may assist in locating the student
* searching for the student, particularly if there is information available as to the student’s potential whereabouts
* following the student and maintaining visual contact until the student returns to school or school-approved activity, or is in the company of the police or their parent or carer
* contacting the student and encouraging them to return to the school grounds or the school approved activity, go to a safe place, stop the behaviour that is putting them at risk, or remain in the company of a suitable and responsible adult.

Staff should only physically restrain an absconding student in exceptional circumstances where it is immediately required and reasonably necessary to protect the safety of a student or other person.

Physically restraining the student when ‘playing chicken’ with cars would comply with the Restraint and Seclusion policy but physically restraining a student for climbing a fence may not be compliant (depending on the circumstances).

Why the student ‘absconds’ needs to be addressed. Understanding the cause/s of the student’s behaviour will help the school find ways to minimise or respond to the behaviour.

If a staff member is following a student (line of sight) alongside a main road after they've absconded, how do they best gauge when to get close enough to restrain, knowing they've crossed before and have almost been hit by a car?

The decision whether to use physical restraint or seclusion rests with the professional judgement and discretion of school staff and will vary in different circumstances and contexts. School staff should ensure they are familiar with the Restraint and Seclusion Policy and Guidelines so they understand the limited circumstances when physical restraint and seclusion may be used.

### Gates, doors, and egress related questions

For more information:

[Locks, coded locks, and door handles guidance (DOCX)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/locks-coded-locks-and-door-handles.docx)

[Essential safety measures and seclusion (DOCX)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/restraint-seclusion-essential-safety-measures-and-seclusion.docx)

[Building Code Vic D2.21 operation of latch statement by school template (DOCX)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/building-code-vic-D2.21-operation-of-latch.docx)

We are a mainstream school and have been told by security to get locks on the internal doors of our BER building because we have a non-verbal child with an IQ below 40 that is running into other classrooms and causing harm to others. What locks are ok?

Principals are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of schools, particularly its safety features. This includes responsibility for ensuring all locks, coded locks and door handles comply with the Building Regulations 2018 (Vic).

Preventing free egress from an area normally used by students – such as a classroom – with a locking mechanism and doors and door handles installed in such a manner as to prevent a student from leaving the room unassisted are prohibited.

The Restraint and Seclusion Policy authorises school staff to use physical restraint and seclusion when reasonable and immediately required to protect the member of staff, the student, or any other person from acts or behaviour that might be dangerous to them. The primary purpose of using physical restraint and seclusion is to prevent harm to a student or someone else.

### Mechanical restraint

We have an older student with severe ID and ASD who frequently hits himself in the face resulting in cuts, scrapes and bruises on his nose and forehead. Would the use of a baseball or gridiron helmet be considered reasonable? It does not restrict breathing and is only used for short periods of time.

Using a helmet is not considered reasonable except for a small group of students who frequently engage in severe SIB and conditional upon the equipment:

* only be used when less restrictive interventions (such as verbal and physical interventions) have failed or are determined to be unsafe or insufficient
* only being used as an interim safety measure to limit serious physical injury to a student that would otherwise be sustained during severe SIB
* being prescribed by a medical practitioner and accompanied by an explanation for how use of the equipment will limit serious physical injury. Items such as clothing, gloves or helmets, and arm guards should be individually fitted for a student. Items should also be easy to put on and take off to avoid prolonged physical contact between a student and staff member/s. Some items may require training by staff.
* being accompanied by a plan for gradually reducing its use through proactive management and prevention strategies. Over-use of protective equipment can cause a student to self-injure differently or to intensify their SIB.

The use of protective equipment must be consistent with the Department’s guidance on mechanical restraint. For more information go to: [Mechanical restraint guidance (DOCX)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/restraint-seclusion-mechanical-restraint.docx)

### Reporting related questions

Scenario question: If a student is climbing on a bookshelf or other unsafe height and a staff member carries the student down, is that considered restraint and does an eduSafe Plus report need to be made?

If you are using physical force to prevent, restrict or subdue the movement of a student’s body or part of their body you are physically restraining the student. Students are not free to move away when they are being physically restrained.

Every instance of physical restraint and seclusion must be reported as an incident on eduSafe Plus, the department’s online incident reporting and hazard management system, or by calling the Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC) on 1800 126 126.

What do you suggest a staff member should do if they believe their school is not following the proper processes by, not providing support to those involved, and not documenting the incident properly?

The staff member should discuss the situation with their principal, regional Area staff of email the Principal Behaviour Support Adviser on: restraint.seclusion@education.vic.gov.au

## Participant questions – 28 August 2023

### Gates, doors, and egress related questions

Is it restraint or seclusion if a classroom has 2 doors, one to a hall that can be locked and another to a playground that cannot be locked, and staff use their own methods of locking the unlock able door to keep students in the classroom during classroom sessions? Follow up question: locks are used to prevent students from leaving to the playground during learning time and to keep them with the class/peers.

There are 6 classes with one hallway running on one side of all classes with a lockable door on this side.

From: [Essential safety measures and seclusion (DOCX)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/restraint-seclusion-essential-safety-measures-and-seclusion.docx)

Schools must ensure students have safe access to, and movement within, school buildings and parts of the buildings normally used by students.

There are 3 exceptions to this rule.

1. Students should not be given access to areas which might pose a health and safety risk to them. For example: a swimming pool area without appropriate supervision.
2. Students should not be given access to areas where access would be inappropriate because of the particular purpose for which the area is used. For example: an IT sever room
3. Students should not be able to move around a school building if a school enacts a ‘lock down procedure’. For example: an intruder is violent and aggressive towards others on a school site or a snake is sighted around buildings and playgrounds.

New, special, and special development schools may need to consider additional factors to ensure students have safe access to, and movement within, their school including:

* the necessity of smoke/fire detection systems to deactivate magnetic locks
* automatic opening front door and security issues
* fencing types and security/containment issues.

Staff have been using their own locks and items to lock the courtyard door to prevent students from leaving the classroom area.

From: [Locks, coded locks, and door handles guidance (DOCX)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/locks-coded-locks-and-door-handles.docx)

There are very limited circumstances where a door may be locked or blocked by other objects or held closed by another person. These limited circumstances arise where:

* there is an imminent threat of physical harm or danger to a student or others, and
* the physical restraint and seclusion are reasonable in all the circumstances, and
* there is no less restrictive measure available in the circumstances.

From: [Locks, coded locks, and door handles guidance (DOCX)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/locks-coded-locks-and-door-handles.docx)

In the event a door is required to be locked or blocked by other objects or held closed by another person, Principals must ensure:

* the purpose for limiting or controlling a student‘s egress from a room or space is to prevent imminent physical harm or danger to a student or others
* the principal has signed a statement affirming that evidence of necessary procedures is in place
* instances of seclusion are reported to the Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC) on 1800 126 126
* the following documentation is readily available in a secure location on site:
* details of the procedures and instructions of what to do if a locked door/s needs to be immediately unlocked
* details of the designated person or persons that have been instructed on the duties of unlocking the locked door/s confirming that the designated person or persons will always be available when the school is lawfully occupied to undertake the responsibility of unlocking locked door/s so that people in the school or part may immediately escape if there is a fire.
* a register of all ESM, including a Fire Safety Management Plan
* an up-to-date Evacuation Plan (or plans)
* a diagram showing the location of the locked door/s.

These students want to leave to the playground but are prevented by the lock on the courtyard.

Staff need to ask why the students want to leave the classroom for the playground. Understanding the reason/s for the students wanting to leave the classroom will help in finding ways to minimise or respond to the behaviour.

* Have staff collected information about the antecedents and consequences that trigger the early signs that the students are wanting to leave the classroom?
* Do staff have a hypothesis for why the students are wanting to leave the classroom?
* Are the predictable activities or times of the day that the students are more likely to want to leave the classroom? Common examples can include when the student has specific learning activities they don’t like or find difficult, or when the student is in trouble with staff or peers. Likewise, it can be useful to identify when students are happy to remain in the classroom, such as during particular activities, when with certain friends or at lunch times.
* Are the students able to communicate why they want to leave the classroom?
* Do the students have the communication skills to request a preferred activity or to take a break from the circumstances that reliably predict the students desire to leave the classroom?

These students are not alone or unsupervised at any time and could return from the courtyard back into the classroom.

From: [Restraint and Seclusion Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-seclusion/policy)

Seclusion refers to leaving a student alone in a room or area from which they are prevented from leaving by a barrier or another person. This includes situations where a door is locked as well as where the door is blocked by other objects or held closed by another person. A plain English version of this definition is that seclusion is when a student is in a room or space on their own that they cannot get out of.

This definition of seclusion does not include supervised situations (where student activity is overseen or watched over by a staff member) such as:

* where one or a few students are taught away from their peers
* exiting a student from their class for the purposes of supporting the student’s ability to re-engage with the class at a later point
* the temporary removal of a student from their regular classroom activities because their behaviour significantly interferes with the learning of other students, the capacity of a teacher to teach all students, or where the student’s behaviour creates a risk of harm to themselves or others
* a behaviour intervention strategy that directs a student away from an activity in one area to another to prevent an escalation of behaviour
* the suspension, detention, or expulsion of a student
* exam and other situations where a student can freely exit an area.

I am concerned about the risk of this being a possible restraint at worst. Or as a secondary concern, that these actions might enable restraint or seclusion as practice.

I think that the information you referred to regarding doors and locks provides DET/PAL guidance by affirming that this is an exit and needs to be available but will confirm with facilities manager and EMP.

Correct. Schools must take care not to inadvertently seclude a student when limiting or controlling the egress from a room or area by another student.

### Seclusion related questions

Is seclusion preferable to physical restraint? E.g., leave a child in a room and evacuate others, then prevent violent student from leaving until they've calmed down.

Neither is preferable over the other.

Staff must use their professional judgement and will be shaped by department’s policy frameworks for duty of care, human rights, child safety, disability and occupational health and safety obligations.

The purpose of acting is to maximise safety and minimise harm to yourself, the student with escalating behaviour and others around the student.

If you are supporting a student 1:1 in a classroom or in the yard away from other students is this considered seclusion?

For more information: [Restraint and Seclusion Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-seclusion/policy)

No, the student must be alone to meet the threshold for seclusion.

### Students fighting

If 2 students are fighting and the teacher doesn’t feel safe to get involved (pregnant) what would be the appropriate course of action?

For more information:

[Fact sheet: Staff intervention in physical altercations between students (DOCX)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/student-altercations-resource-fact-sheet.docx)

School staff have a [duty of care](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/duty-of-care/policy) in relation to students and, under the [Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/education-and-training-reform-act-2006/092), must also take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others (including students) who may be affected by what they do or don’t do at work.

School staff are required to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm to students when intervening in a student altercation. In this context, ‘reasonable’ means:

* proportionate to the risk of harm to themselves and to the students
* respectful of the student’s dignity
* the steps taken are discontinued once the risk of harm has dissipated.

Staff need to balance the likelihood of harm occurring if intervention measures are *not* taken against the risk of harm to the staff member themselves if intervening in a student altercation.

**Staff intervening in physical altercations – *without* physical intervention**

Staff should take proactive steps to reduce the risk of harm in all student altercations. These steps will depend on the individual circumstances but might include:

* verbally intervening, using authority as a teacher, and issuing clear directions to the students to stop any threatening or violent behaviour
* sending other students to gather more staff to support staff already at the scene
* physically moving towards the students, to exert authority
* directing other students to move away from the fight
* calling the police, where appropriate – or getting another staff member to call the police.

### Self-protection

What happens if a student was trying to hit or bite a teacher and they used a chair as a shield to prevent getting hit or bitten?

Staff have a duty of care towards both the students they work with and their own safety and wellbeing. That said, there is an expectation that before a staff member uses a (raised) chair to defend themselves, they have:

* exhausted non-physical interventions
* tried to move out of student’s reach to the nearest point of safety. (The greatest risk will always come from being within arm’s length of a physically aggressive person)
* tried to distract the student and given the student an escape option
* tried to use of the environment as a defensive measure: move behind tables, chairs, or place them as obstacle if needed.

Using a (raised) chair as a defensive measure must be reasonable, the least restrictive option available, and proportionate to the student’s behaviour.

If the child was injured as a result what happens around that?

Regardless of the outcome, that a student is injured by the (raised) chair, the school should follow the department’s critical incident or emergency management procedures. These can be found by following this link: [Managing and Reporting School Incidents (Including Emergencies) policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/reporting-and-managing-school-incidents-including-emergencies/policy)

## Participant questions – 23 November 2023

### Physical Restraint

If a student is required to be physically restrained, what method do you recommend?

The department does not specify or provide training on how to restrain a student.

Physical restraint and seclusion are only permitted within Victorian government schools in exceptional circumstances where it is immediately required and reasonably necessary to protect the safety of a student or another person. Physical restraint and seclusion cannot be planned actions.

Can more than one staff member physically restrain a student?

If necessary, yes.

Is holding a hand firmly of a young student while walking on an excursion restraint?

‘Holding’ is a practice that is without physical force. Holding a student’s hand or placing an arm around the student’s shoulder to provide care, comfort, stability, and guidance is permitted.

Things to consider:

* If you must enter someone’s personal space to provide care, comfort, stability, or guidance, explain your actions so the student understands your actions.
* Be mindful of your gestures, facial expressions, movements, and tone of voice. Keeping your tone and body language neutral will go a long way toward defusing a situation.
* Avoid overreacting. Remain calm, rational, and professional.
* Set limits. Offer concise and respectful choices and consequences.
* Choose wisely what you insist upon. It is important to be thoughtful in deciding which rules are negotiable and which are not.

What is the department’s guidance on preventing a student from leaving a classroom?

Leaving the room: Unless there is an imminent risk of significant harm to the student or others, and no other reasonable actions are possible, restraint is not considered a reasonable response to a student leaving a classroom/room. It is possible that restraint in these circumstances may further escalate the situation, that the student may react to being restrained with physical aggression towards the person restraining, putting them at risk of harm. Duty of care requirements mean that staff should maintain supervision of the student and be able to intervene to maintain the student’s safety when they leave the room.

Consider these 2 examples.

1. A primary student pushes their work off the desk, screams that they hate the teacher and runs, heading for the classroom door. There does not appear to be any imminent risk of harm, and it is not appropriate to block the student’s exit or restrain them. Staff should use other reasonable means to get the student to stop, including providing directions to stop, using visual gestures and signs to stop, or other communication methods appropriate for the student. Once the student exits, staff should ensure that they are able to maintain duty of care, either by maintaining visual supervision of the student outside the room or requesting additional support to supervise the student and their current class.
2. A secondary student, Theo, has been angrily talking during class time about an incident that occurred at lunch with another student, threatening to “smash him” when he sees him again. The teacher talks to Theo 3 times during the lesson to see if they can resolve the issue and get him to calm down. Halfway through the lesson, Theo sees the boy from lunchtime walking past the classroom, he swears loudly as he gets up from his desk, and rushes to the leave the classroom. The teacher hears the yelling, sees Theo getting up from his desk, and feels there is an immediate risk the boy outside the room will be attacked. They call out to Theo to stop, but Theo keeps moving towards the doorway towards the student. Not knowing how else to stop Theo, the teacher grabs his sleeve to pull him back, letting go once they get in front and block the doorway. The teacher felt the risk of harm was imminent, they tried calling to Theo to stop, the restraint used (grabbing the sleeve) was proportionate to the risk of harm, and they let go once they could block the doorway.

Under a desk/furniture or behind objects: Like the example above, unless there is an imminent risk of harm or danger to the student or others, and no other reasonable actions are possible, restraint is not considered a reasonable response to a student being under a desk. It is possible that restraint in these circumstances may further escalate the situation, that the student may react to being restrained with physical aggression towards the person restraining, putting them at risk of harm.

Consider the following scenario and different responses:

A primary student, Clancy, has become agitated and is crying. The teacher is not sure why, but Clancy has crawled under his desk during the writing task and is refusing to come out and return to his seat. Clancy is now interfering with other students, pinching their legs, and becoming very disruptive. He is ignoring the teachers requests to stop. The teacher asks the other students at the table to leave their chairs and come over to the floor near the whiteboard. Clancy moves the chairs at the table so that they form a wall around him under the desk, blocking the teacher from getting close to him. They try to talk to Clancy to find out what is wrong, but he does not respond to the teacher.

Response 1: The teacher decides that there is no imminent danger, although it is very disruptive, and they send 2 students to the administration to ask for additional support if available. In the meantime, they let Clancy know he can stay under the desk until he is ready, and, pausing the writing activity to bring the class to the floor, they play a game of hangman together on the whiteboard.

Response 2: The teacher is not sure why Clancy has built a “fort” under the table, but being concerned about his wellbeing, they start to pull away the chairs to get him out. Clancy tries to hang onto the chairs, preventing the teacher from pulling them away. By the time the teacher manages to pull a chair away Clancy is very agitated, crying and yelling. Even more concerned now, the teacher squats down and to grab Clancy’s leg and bring him out, but Clancy starts “cycle kicking” with free his leg, striking the teacher in the face as he does so.

In this response, while the teacher was concerned by Clancy’s behaviour, there was no imminent danger, as Clancy was remaining under the table and other students had been moved away. Grabbing Clancy by the leg to bring him out would be considered a restraint and would not be permitted in these circumstances.

### Reporting related questions

If 2 staff members are involved in restraint, do they both need to submit an eduSafe report?

Incidents should only be reported by one person. Only principals and workplace managers can report critical incidents by default, although principals can delegate their management authority to staff who they wish to have the same reporting and management access as them.

When adding a moderate to low incident on EduSafe, why does it not allow you to select a student? (We put self-harm incidents through as 'other/unknown'.)

Principals and workplace managers can nominate staff members as delegates. Delegates can report all critical and emergency incidents in eduSafe Plus and see students.

### Professional development event

#### Are we able to receive a copy of the slides following the presentation?

Yes, they will be published in PAL. Follow this link: [Restraint and Seclusion resources](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-seclusion/resources)