



Te Puke Intermediate School

Next review: Term 2 2025

Acceptable Physical Contact

At Te Puke Intermediate School, 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 Te Puke Intermediate School 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

Te Puke Intermediate School is responsible for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our students, and does not permit 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


Te Puke Intermediate School 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** 

Release history: Term 1 2023

Last review	Term 1 2023
Topic type	Core