



To: Managerial Authorities, and Principals of Recognised Primary and Post-Primary Schools, the Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards

Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations – Update on Training, and Monitoring and Oversight arrangements

1. Introduction and Purpose

This circular should be read in conjunction with Circular 0081/2024 which was issued to accompany the publication of the *Guidelines on Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations* in December 2024. The purpose of this circular is to provide updates to school management bodies and schools on developments relating to training to support implementation of the Guidelines in schools, as well as monitoring and oversight of practices which have been put in place.

It is important for schools to note and engage with the full range of additional resources which have been, or will be, provided to enable them to meet the needs of students. In addition to the *Guidelines on Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations*, these include:

- Revised Guidelines for Schools on Codes of Behaviour due to be published by Tusla's Education Support Service (TESS).
- The Relate framework published by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) - a resource to help school staff better understand and support behaviour, with relationships and regulation at the core. A full copy of Relate is available [here](#).

All three resources are designed to complement each other and to assist schools to review existing practices and to identify ways to promote student engagement. Training for schools on the Relate framework is available from the NCSE. The NCSE has a detailed [TPL calendar](#) which can be accessed on its website. Training on TESS Guidelines for Schools on Codes of Behaviour will be provided and this will be notified separately.

2. Training to Support Implementation of the *Guidelines on Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations*

The importance of training for teachers and other school staff in the successful implementation of the *Guidelines* at school level is acknowledged. In that regard, progress has been made in respect of the provision of training for schools on the *Guidelines*, including procured specialist training for special schools.

For the remainder of the school year 2025/2026, the following arrangements will also be in place:

- Schools will have access to online webinars and face-to-face information sessions in Education Centres. These sessions provide an overview of the *Guidelines* and highlight key messages in relation to the use of proactive and preventative approaches alongside crisis responses.
- The existing specialist procured training programme provided by the NCSE will continue, as required, for special schools. Access to specialist training for teachers in special classes in mainstream schools will commence for schools that have completed the prerequisite NCSE training. All training will be on a 'train the trainer' basis where a teacher in a school will receive training and will become an accredited trainer for their school.
- Substitution is provided for teachers to attend the training days, where necessary and with the approval of the Board of Management.
- Training will be available for boards of management regarding their role in monitoring and overseeing implementation of the *Guidelines* as well as reporting requirements.

Schools can request behaviour support training from the NCSE via the School Portal. NCSE has a number of seminars and supports designed to help understand and support behaviour in schools. These include:

- The Relate Model of Support
- Understanding Behaviour
- Understanding and Supporting Behaviour (Post-primary)
- An Introduction to Autism
- 2-Day Introduction to Autism for New Teachers in Autism Classes
- 4-day Introduction to Autism for New Teachers of New Special Classes
- Supporting Autistic Students in Special Schools

Additionally, there are a number of Department of Education and Youth training opportunities and resources that are complementary to key messaging in the *Guidelines* as they are aimed at supporting a wide range of behaviour in schools.

Neart

Neart is the new national programme of mental health and wellbeing supports and training for post-primary schools. *Neart* is a collaboration between Jigsaw – The National Centre for Youth Mental Health - and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) / Department of Education and Youth. Schools can register their interest in *Neart* programmes by signing up [Here](#).

Neart is providing a comprehensive suite of mental health and wellbeing resources, training and programmes for post-primary schools. The link to the *Neart* webpage is accessible [Here](#).

Trauma

NEPS Trauma Informed Approach consists of two training courses:

- Introducing Trauma Informed Practice - The Stress Factor, Getting the Balance Right is a **NEPS e-Learning** course for schools. Registration for this **self-paced e-Learning** course is accessible using the following link: [National Educational Psychological Service \(NEPS\) resources and publications](#).
- Following completion of the e-Learning course, school staff are invited to attend a **live online webinar** Understanding Trauma: Using a Trauma Informed Approach in Schools is advertised on Gov.ie - [National Educational Psychological Service \(NEPS\)](#) and by invite from local NEPS offices.

These courses focus on understanding the sources of stress and trauma and their impact on learning, behaviour and wellbeing. They aim to support school staff to build resilience for all including students with additional needs and those affected by trauma and adversity. They guide schools to understand the key elements of a trauma informed approach and provide practical school-based strategies and approaches for those who may have experienced trauma.

A guidance document due to be published in 2026 - Understanding Stress, Trauma and Adversity - Implementing a Whole School Approach to Stress and Trauma Informed Practice, Guidance for all School Staff outlines the NEPS Trauma Informed Approach and accompanies the training courses.

3. Monitoring and Oversight

The *Guidelines on Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations* emphasise the importance of prevention, early intervention and de-escalation measures as a means of ensuring that schools can support students effectively. However, the *Guidelines* note that there may be crisis situations or circumstances whereby a physical restraint is deemed unavoidable. Physical restraint, as defined in the *Guidelines*, is only permitted where there is imminent risk to students' physical safety or the safety of others.

Should physical restraint have to be used in a school, it is critically important that the school follows the procedures outlined in the *Guidelines*; for example, ongoing monitoring and assessment of the safety and wellbeing of all; involving parents at the earliest possible juncture, and the subsequent reflection by the teacher/principal/other member of school staff as part of the monitoring and review of the situation, in order to inform future engagement and prevent re-occurrence. It is recommended that schools use the NCSE Relate 'Phases of Support' tool to proactively plan for future actions to minimise the need for further applications of restraint.

Any incident involving the use of physical restraint must be reported to the school principal and the board of management and ETB, if applicable. Boards have an important role in providing oversight of student behaviour in their schools. Any reports of the use of physical restraint from teachers/other school staff to the board should be carefully reviewed. If there are any child protection concerns arising from the report received from the teacher/other member of staff, these should be reported to Tusla or An Garda Síochána.

As outlined in Circular 0081/2024, schools have been required to report any instances of the use of physical restraint to the NCSE from September 2025. This information will help the NCSE in further developing future training and supports in this area. An updated Resource 4, contained in the Guidelines, has been developed to facilitate ease of reporting to the NCSE. This updated resource is available [here](#). Resource 4 is the only format the NCSE can accept from schools when reporting incidents of physical restraint. Schools should refrain from forwarding any other form of report to the NCSE.

The Inspectorate plays a role in monitoring the work schools do to support students' behaviour. In all whole-school type evaluations conducted by the Inspectorate, parents have the opportunity to complete a survey, which includes additional questions about physical restraint. In addition, the Inspectorate will be requested to undertake thematic work on the systems and approaches in place in schools to manage and support children and young people's regulation and behaviour.

In some instances, parents may be unhappy about the way in which a school managed the use of physical restraint and has addressed this through the school's complaints procedures. It is envisaged that the majority of complaints will be resolved to the satisfaction of both the parents and the school concerned. However, it is acknowledged that there may be instances in which some parents are still not satisfied despite having followed the school's complaints procedure. In these circumstances, parents will have access to a designated portal from September 2026, which will enable them to bring their complaint to the Department for consideration. The group that will consider the parents' complaint will be independent of the department and will include former inspectors and psychologists as well as representatives of education stakeholder and advocacy groups. Appendix 1 below sets out the process that will apply in facilitating parents to access the portal.

Separately, the department is continuing to progress the Charter Bill¹ through the Houses of the Oireachtas. The overall aim of the Bill is to improve the level of engagement between the school community by inviting feedback, comment and observation from the school community and by further developing a listening culture in schools. One of the key concepts of the Bill is the need for a school to consult with students and their parents on individual school plans, policies and activities. The legislation will help ensure that the school community continues to work in partnership effectively and will provide greater clarity for students and their parents on what they can expect from schools.

In relation to complaints, the Bill proposes to replace the existing Section 28 of the Education Act, 1998 with a new Section 28 which, working with other provisions of the Bill, will ensure that all schools will be required to have and to implement standardised complaints procedures for parental complaints and complaints from pupils and students. The charter guidelines, which will be developed in consultation with education stakeholders including parents and advocacy groups, will set out the details of the complaints procedures and these will focus on dealing with complaints efficiently, effectively and, as far as possible, informally.

¹ Currently referred to as the "Charter Bill" however, under amendments to the Bill recently passed by the Cabinet in the Memo for Govt, it is intended to change the title.

It is intended that learning from the use of the designated portal for parents in respect of physical restraint would help inform the development of complaints procedures which are intended to be robust, child-centred and legislatively based. On that basis it is envisaged that the portal will not ultimately be required when the new complaints procedures become operational in all recognised schools.

The *Guidelines* do not replace any existing statutory or school-level obligations or processes. Parents and guardians should continue to follow the school's complaints procedure in the first instance. Allegations of child protection concerns must continue to be reported to Tusla and An Garda Síochána, who remain the appropriate authorities in such cases.

4. Reviewing and updating school policies

The Board of Management (BoM) and ETBs (if applicable) are responsible for the overall management of the school, ensuring its effective operation and providing a safe environment for students. The BoM of a school has overall responsibility for the development, implementation and review of a number of interrelated school policies and practices.

It must prepare, make available and publish a school code of behaviour (Section 23 of the Education Welfare Act, 2000 as amended Admission to Schools Act 2018, Section 10a), which must adhere to the National Educational Welfare Board (Tusla) document "Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for School" (NEWB, 2008). As part of its work in this area, boards of management and ETBs are strongly encouraged to develop a policy on use of physical restraint.

The Department, in partnership with school management bodies, has developed a policy template to support schools in developing and implementing a policy. In addition, the Department has prepared a set of answers to frequently asked questions and these are available [here](#)

Issued by: Brendan Doody, Special Education

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Process for Parents/Guardians if unhappy with management of an incident of physical restraint

If a parent/guardian has followed the school's complaints process in relation to an incident of physical restraint and remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may submit a complaint through the DEY Portal. Complaints submitted via the DEY Portal will be examined by an independent review group.

Using the DEY Portal for Complaints concerning Incidents of Physical Restraint

Step 1. The parent/guardian will complete a form which

will provide:

- Details of the incident
- Information on the school's response to the incident
- Details of the complaints process followed by the school and parent

Step 3. Focus of Review Group

The review group will examine:

- Was restraint used? Did the use of restraint comply with the published Guidelines?
 - If deemed necessary a representative from the review group will engage further with both school and/or the parent/guardian

Step 5. Final Correspondence

The Department will send written confirmation of the outcome to both the parent and the school. If the parent remains dissatisfied, the correspondence will also provide information on other possible avenues, such as: Tusla; Ombudsman for Children; Teaching Council



Step 2. Department Follow-Up with School

The school will be asked to confirm:

- How they addressed the incident
- How they followed the complaints process
- The rationale for their outcome

Step 4. Determination of Outcome Following the review:

If the school followed the correct process:

- The Department will inform the parent and confirm this finding with the school

If the school did not follow the correct process:

- The Department will outline the shortcomings to the school
- The Department will ensure the school understands where errors occurred
- Training from the NCSE may be offered