



The Ela Murray International School

TEMIS Professional Boundaries Policy

This document provides advice to all staff in their interaction with students. All employees are required to follow the guidelines laid out in this document. The aim of the document is to:

- ensure that student safety is paramount within our schools
- provide appropriate protection for staff in dealing with students.

Maintaining professional boundaries with students

- All staff members are responsible for maintaining a professional role with the student.
- Teachers and classroom assistants must establish clear professional boundaries with students as a blurring of these boundaries may lead to misunderstandings, if not a violation of the professional relationship.
- Boundary violation occurs when a staff member misuses authority and power to take advantage of a student's trust.

Duty of care

All staff members have a duty of care to ensure no student is exposed to any risk of harm. In relationships with students, teachers and classroom assistants are always expected to act in accordance with this document to ensure that the welfare of the student is safeguarded. The behaviour of all staff dealing with students must always be regulated by these guidelines both within and beyond the school setting.

The following expectations apply at all times:

- risks to students through school activities are minimised through the assessment of possible risks
- staff responsible for supervising students have appropriate training and experience
- adequate supervision is provided for students
- clear school procedures and policies are available and applied in the school environment
- the employee/student relationship over rides any other relationship that might exist between the employee and student
- the responsibility for exercising duty of care cannot be delegated

Appropriate physical contact guidelines

General Guidelines

- Avoid touching a student anywhere other than the hand, arm, shoulder, or upper back.

- Avoid being with a student in a one-on-one, out of sight situation, and never touch a student in such a situation.
- Do not presume that a hug or touch is acceptable to a particular student.

- Do not touch a student in a way that may be uncomfortable for the student.
- Use verbal directions rather than touching e.g. ask a student to turn this way, rather than physically placing child in the required position.
- In some circumstances, a young child may require appropriate deflection of physical contact from the teacher without embarrassing the child about this contact (e.g. minimising of unnecessary physical contact with teacher by removing child's hand from teacher).
- Avoid being alone with a student. Ask a colleague to join you if it is appropriate to speak to only one child. If being alone with a child is unavoidable, ensure you are in plain sight (e.g. near an open door).
- Do not use the student toilets at any time.

Appropriate physical contact by a staff member to assist a student

At times, staff members will be required to give assistance to a student who is hurt or needs particular assistance or encouragement. The following examples of physical contact that are acceptable are:

- administration of first aid
- helping a child who has fallen
- assisting with the toileting of a disabled student*
- demonstrating for example in sport, music, and dance. In this case, teachers may implement alternate strategies of demonstration e.g. asking students to demonstrate
- non intrusive gesture to comfort a child e.g. hand on shoulder

(* An individual plan for students with these needs must be implemented for such situations)

Appropriate physical contact by a staff member to encourage a student

- Non-intrusive touch e.g. congratulating a student by shaking hands for efforts well done

Guidelines for managing professional boundaries

The following guidelines may assist staff members in assessing their application of professional boundaries:

- Am I dealing in a different manner with a particular student than with others under the same circumstances?
- Would I do or say this if a colleague was present?
- Is my dress/availability/language different from the normal with a particular student?
- Are the consequences of my actions likely to have negative outcomes?
- Are my personal feelings translating into inappropriate actions?
- Is my conduct with a student demeaning or belittling them?
- Could my behaviour be misinterpreted in any way

Staff members are required to bring to the attention of Principal or Deputy Principal any violations of any of these boundaries by themselves or colleagues. This is essential given the duty of care responsibility borne by schools in educating students within the school environment.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour when dealing with students

Boundary	Example of violation
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inappropriate comments about a student's appearance • inappropriate conversation of a sexual nature • use of inappropriate pet names • jokes of a sexual nature • obscene gestures and language • facilitating access to pornographic or overtly sexual material • personal correspondence including email, phone, SMS text
Self-disclosure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussing personal details of lifestyle of self or others. It is appropriate and necessary at times, however, to draw on relevant personal life experiences when teaching but these should not contravene boundaries between student and child • sharing of personal information about other staff or students
Physical contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unwarranted and/or inappropriate touching of a student • initiating or permitting inappropriate physical contact by a student e.g. massage
Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inviting students home • being alone with a student after hours • watching students in a change room • driving a student unaccompanied • using student toilets
Targeting individual students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gifts & special favours • tutoring without permission and in an isolated situation

Using non physical intervention in a student management situation

Non-physical intervention is the recognised means of managing student conduct. Where a problem with a student becomes apparent, non-physical interventions include:

- directing other students to move away from the situation
- talking with the individual student (telling the student to stop the behaviour, and telling the student what will happen if they do not stop)
- directing the student to a safe place sending for assistance from other staff
- use of verbal directions is always preferred to physical intervention. It is not appropriate to make (unwanted) physical contact with a student (eg pushing, grabbing, poking, pulling etc) in order to ensure they comply with directions. Under no circumstances should staff use corporal punishment or engage in any form of conduct which might cause physical or emotional harm to students.

Using physical restraint where a student's safety is threatened

Staff may need to make legitimate use of physical restraint, if a student is:

- attacking another student or teacher
- posing an immediate danger to self or others

Where physical restraint is used, a teacher should continue to talk with the child throughout the incident, and make clear that physical restraint will stop when it ceases to be necessary, and ensure that a calm and professional approach is maintained.

Staff members are not to use physical intervention when non-physical interventions could be used,

Appropriate physical force may be permitted to ensure that the employer's duty of care to protect students from risk of injury is met. Common law defences such as *self defence*, and defence of others remain legitimate reasons for the use of physical contact.

Everyone has the right to defend themselves against an attack provided they do not use a disproportionate degree of force to do so.

Good practice when using physical restraint

- The use of force against a student in such situations is to prevent injury.
- It may be a valid decision for a teacher not to use physical force in a situation involving several students, or a physically larger student, where the teacher believes that doing so would make injury to him/herself more likely. In such cases, the teacher should remove other students who may be at risk and seek help from another staff member (or in extreme cases the security guards).
- If you are considering physical restraint first ask the question: What will happen if I do not restrain the child?

- The use of force must be reasonable and always be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result, and take into account the age, understanding and sex of the child.
- The force must not include any force applied to the head or neck of a child, or to any other part of the body as to cause harm that lasts more than a short period.
- Physical actions to restrain which exceed reasonable force or other actions which involve restrictions to breathing, punching, kicking or holding by the hair or ear would be deemed assault.
- Prompt documentation of incidents is essential and records must be maintained. (The incident record form must be filled in).
- Parents should be informed promptly of any incident involving their child and given an opportunity to discuss the matter.
- Parents should be informed by the school, at enrolment, of the school's policy on physical contact with students.
- Physical intervention can involve coming between children, blocking a child's path, leading a child by the hand or arm, shepherding a child away by placing a hand in the centre of the upper back, and in extreme circumstances, using more restrictive holds.
- Seclusion restraint – physically confining a student alone in a room or limited space without access to school staff is not an acceptable practice. If a "time – out" strategy is used by staff in dealing with students, staff must remain accessible at all times.