

DETENTION AND TIME-OUT GUIDELINES

Implementation document for the Student Behaviour policy

These guidelines support principals and NSW public school staff to understand the department's position on detention, teacher-directed time-out and self-directed time-out. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the department's [Restrictive Practices Framework](#) and [Restrictive Practices Reduction and Elimination Policy](#).

1 Seclusion

Seclusion is the sole confinement of a child or young person in a setting from which they are physically unable to leave, or reasonably believe that they cannot leave, for any length of time and where there is no supervision.

Seclusion is not permitted, except in response to an emergency or crisis situation where there is an imminent risk of harm to a student, staff or other students. Schools must ensure that detention, teacher-directed time-out and self-directed time-out are used in line with the guidance set out below, to ensure these strategies are not used in a way that may be considered seclusion.

2 Detention and reflection

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students and staff, as well as provide an educational environment where all students can achieve and succeed, it is essential that behaviour is managed appropriately. Where students do not respond positively to the standards and expectations of the school, it may be necessary to apply a fair, reasonable and proportionate action.

Detention and reflection rooms are a planned consequence that involves a single student, or group of students, generally being in a designated room or area. The purpose of these is to support the student to reflect on their behaviour and make positive choices. The student is always supervised in the room by at least one adult and the student is not left alone at any time. Detention and reflection should never take place in rooms that can be chained, locked or closed in any way that prevents a student from freely leaving the space.

Principals, in consultation with the school community, make informed decisions about the use of detention and reflection rooms as a response to student behaviour and reflect these in the [School Behaviour Support and Management Plan \(PDF 116 KB\)](#) by the end of Term 2, 2023 (the School Discipline Plan until the end of Term 2, 2023) to align with the [Student Behaviour policy](#) and [procedures \(PDF 513 KB\)](#).

The School Behaviour Support and Management Plan (from the end of Term 2, 2023) or School Discipline Plan (until the end of Term 2, 2023) should include the following information about detention and reflection processes:

- details of when they will occur
- the maximum length of time appropriate to the age/developmental level of student
- food and toilet breaks
- the teachers authorised by the principal to facilitate them
- how the school will record them.

3 Teacher-directed time-out

Teacher-directed time-out is a planned behaviour intervention that is implemented as part of a behaviour support plan based on an assessment of the behaviour. It is used to prevent an escalation of behaviour and support the teaching of appropriate behaviour and skills, such as self-regulation.

Teacher-directed time-out should only be used after other de-escalation strategies and teaching practices have been tried. It occurs when a student is directed away from an educational activity or setting when they engage in behaviours of concern to stop those behaviours from being reinforced.

Teacher-directed time-out should be paired with restorative conversations as part of behaviour support planning to include goals, explicit instruction of replacement behaviours, measures to check progress and personalised feedback to the student as they develop replacement behaviours.

When directing a student to teacher-directed time-out, make sure:

- to use a space within the classroom or nearby where the student can be supported
- the student is monitored by the teacher
- it is for the shortest possible time.

Teacher-directed time-out should never:

- be used to punish a student
- occur in a closet or closed space without a window
- occur in rooms where doors are chained, locked or closed in any way that prevents a student from leaving the space or where a student reasonably feels they are unable to leave.

4 Self-directed time-out

Self-directed time-out enables a student to remove themselves from a situation or environment causing stress. This is sometimes called time away, chill out time or cool down time. It is a planned informal behaviour support strategy that may be used as part of a behaviour support response and documented as an agreed strategy.

Self-directed time-out enables students to leave a stressful situation for time alone and is often used to prevent an escalation of behaviour. It is designed to provide opportunities to regulate emotions and behaviour. Students must be monitored by a teacher while they are having self-directed time-out.

Self-directed time-out occurs when the student:

- recognises a situation may increase stress to them or lead to an escalation in their behaviour
- requests permission to use self-directed time-out from the classroom
- signals and leaves the classroom or educational activity without prompting or support
- goes to a prearranged room or area, for example a garden, quiet space, lounge room
- is monitored at all times while they are having self-directed time
- chooses to return to the classroom or educational activity as soon as they feel able to do so and within an agreed timeframe as part of their plan.

Note: Sometimes a student may seek a self-directed time-out as a task avoidance or other function of behaviour. If it is occurring regularly, the teacher can use informal data to track for patterns and complete a Functional Behaviour Assessment to determine alternate strategies, if required.

What is not a self-directed time-out strategy?

The following examples are not self-directed time-out strategies, nor do they form part of a student's individual behaviour support planning, or other individual plan if one is already in place. Schools must take appropriate action in the event of any of the following:

- **absconding** – when a student has hurriedly left the school grounds or a school-approved activity or has otherwise gone missing from the learning space
- **truancy** – unauthorised absences from school or the classroom, indicating that a child has missed school without permission or appropriate reason
- **fight or flight responses** – an automatic physiological reaction to an event that is perceived as stressful or frightening. It triggers an acute stress response that prepares the body to fight or flee.

When using time-out strategies, schools and staff should also consider the following:

- Positive and proactive behaviour management strategies are to be employed before the use of time-out in all environments (applying the care continuum)
- Behaviour expectations are to be clearly outlined and communicated to students and parents/carers through the Behaviour Code for Students (PDF 83 KB), School Behaviour Support and Management Plan (PDF 116 KB) (by the end of Term 2, 2023), School Discipline Plan (until replaced by School Behaviour Support and Management Plan) and school expectations
- Use local supports, such as the Delivery Support Team Around a School to support and manage student behaviour
- Time-out strategies are not the same as a suspension. The Student Behaviour policy, procedures (PDF 513 KB) and related supporting documents outline a range of interventions, alternative actions to support behaviour, and the suspension and expulsion processes. In addressing any behaviour of concern, referral to these documents is required. The Detention and Time-out Guidelines do not replace these documents and should be read alongside them.

Examples

Detention and reflection

What is detention/reflection?

- A student has demonstrated repeated inappropriate behaviours that have been addressed at both the classroom and executive level. The student has been directed to the reflection room at lunch time to participate in a restorative conversation and encourage them to make positive choices.
- A student did not complete homework from the night before. The teacher directs the student to spend half of lunch the following day completing the homework in the detention room.

What isn't detention/reflection?

- The teacher keeps the whole class in for 10 minutes at the start of lunch due to ongoing behaviours of concern throughout the lesson by 5 students. The purpose of using this time is to discuss with the students the school's expectation of behaviour and to identify any issues that may need to be addressed.
- The teacher keeps a student in for 10 minutes at the start of lunch due to not finishing class work.

Teacher-directed time-out

What is teacher-directed time-out?

- A student is told by the teacher to go to the breakout room next to the classroom for 10 minutes to calm down after repeatedly yelling at another student.
 - The breakout room has glass windows on the sides that face the classroom and a door.
 - The student believes that they can move freely between the classroom and breakout room.
 - This strategy is in the student's individual planning.
- After using a range of de-escalation strategies, a student is directed by a teacher to go to a buddy class and complete their work to minimise the escalation of minor inappropriate behaviour. This is a planned strategy that is part of their individual student planning.

What isn't teacher-directed time-out?

- A student is told by the teacher to go to the breakout room next to the classroom for 10 minutes to calm down after repeatedly yelling at another student.
 - The breakout room has glass windows on the sides that face the classroom and a door.
 - The student cannot move freely and believes they cannot leave the space.
- A student is escalating non-compliance behaviours and the teacher directs the student to go to the office to talk to a school executive with their work. This is not teacher-directed time-out because it is not a planned agreed strategy.

Self-directed time-out

What is self-directed time-out?

- A primary school student goes to the classroom chillout space, which is a beanbag in the corner of the room, when he feels like he needs a break from writing tasks.
 - This is a supervised pre-arranged area used by the student to self-regulate.
 - The use of this space is a planned strategy identified in the student's individual student planning.
 - The student is able to move freely and between spaces and can be seen by the teacher at all times.
- A high school student leaves the classroom and sits on a chair outside the room when she becomes anxious following teacher instructions.
 - The student can be seen by the teacher.
 - It is part of the student's individual planning to teach appropriate replacement behaviours.
 - The student can move freely and between spaces.

What isn't self-directed time-out?

- A student hurriedly leaves a classroom, school grounds or goes missing without advising the teacher.
 - This is called absconding.
 - It cannot be a planned strategy or part of the student's individual planning.
- A student in high school has unauthorised absences from school or the classroom and has missed school without permission or appropriate reason.
 - This is called truancy.
 - It cannot be a planned strategy or part of the student's individual planning.