

Department of Education reminds teachers to avoid physically restraining or removing children from classrooms



TEACHERS are being reminded to avoid physically restraining or removing children from classrooms unless there is an emergency.

The Department of Education reminded primary school principals at a recent meeting that existing guidelines prohibit teachers from touching children if they're misbehaving.

It is understood some primary schools had used agreements struck with parents to allow young children to be physically moved if they persistently refuse to co-operate, or if they stopped classrooms from operating effectively.

A senior teacher said this sometimes occurred if children had serious learning difficulties and there was no other option to maintain classroom order.

But the Education Department has strongly reinforced its edict that physically moving children should only be used in extreme instances.

The guidelines say restraint of students should only be used when there is an emergency or when there is danger of harm to students or others.

Restraint can also be used to "prevent the student from inflicting harm on him/herself and/or others" and when "there is no reasonable alternative that can be taken to avoid the danger".

The rules also spell out that restraint was not allowed by teachers trying to "maintain good order or respond to a class/school disruption".

A spokeswoman for the Department of Education, Vanessa O'Shaughnessy, said the "guidelines have not changed" but that "individual principals may occasionally remind staff of the content of the School Policy and Advisory Guide because this is where staff can access quick advice".

"The School Policy and Advisory Guide requires teachers to be respectful of students, and restraining a student is only permitted in emergency situations where a student is endangering themselves or others," she said.

"Physical restraint is not appropriate for responding to misbehaviour and teachers have a range of positive and effective behaviour management strategies to address challenging behaviour, including partnerships with parents."

QUESTIONS:

1. Summarise this article in two full paragraphs.
2. What is your opinion of the article - do you think teachers SHOULD or SHOULDN'T be able to physically restrain students and why?
3. When did the Education Department say it was okay to become physical?
4. List three possible situations that could occur in a classroom or school that would allow a teacher to physically restrain a student.
5. Do you think that physical acts, such as the cane or a whip across the knuckles, was a fair way to punish kids who misbehaved in the olden days? Why/why not?
6. Besides physical punishments, what other strategies can you think of that teachers could use to handle confronting situations with students?

