



Education &  
Communities

*Public Schools NSW*

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# **Guidelines for the Use of Time-out Strategies Including Dedicated Time-out Rooms**

**Student Engagement and  
Interagency Partnerships  
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# Guidelines for the use of time-out strategies including dedicated time-out rooms

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. These guidelines set out requirements for the use of time-out strategies, including dedicated time-out rooms, in NSW government schools.
- 1.2. Time-out strategies include isolation in the student's classroom, another teacher's room or with an executive member of staff, or the use of a dedicated time-out room.
- 1.3. In joint Department of Education and Communities, NSW Health, NSW Juvenile Justice or Corrective Services NSW settings additional specific behaviour management protocols apply. These guidelines do not replace those behaviour management protocols developed jointly with other agencies.

## 2. Context

- 2.1. Good discipline is fundamental to the achievement of Government priorities for the public school system. Schools must implement the [Student Welfare Policy](#) and develop a School Discipline Policy consistent with [Student Discipline in Government Schools Policy](#) in consultation with the school community.
- 2.2. Time-out lies within the continuum of interventions used to assist students to regulate and/or control their behaviour. It is used as a proactive strategy to support self-calming and to provide an opportunity for students to reflect on their actions.
- 2.3. Any decision a school makes about the establishment of time-out strategies must only be taken after consultation with the school community in the context of the development or review of the school's discipline policy.
- 2.4. [Suspension and Expulsion of School Students – Procedures](#) sets out the procedures for short and long suspensions and expulsion of students. All suspensions from school must be managed consistent with these procedures. Time-out strategies are not to be regarded as a suspension.

## 3. Time-out strategies

- 3.1. Time-out strategies are included by some schools in their school discipline policies for use when a student is behaving inappropriately and a temporary separation from that particular environment may assist in supporting the student to demonstrate appropriate behaviour.
- 3.2. Time-out strategies are not to be used as punishment or as a means of removing students indefinitely from the classroom. Time-out may be teacher directed, or student selected, as a means of calming during a stressful situation within a safe and predictable environment.

- 3.3. A time-out strategy should be used only for the minimum period of time necessary for the student to regain enough composure to be able to return safely to class.
- 3.4. Procedures for the use of time-out strategies should be communicated to all students, parents and carers and school staff and must include information for parents and carers about the process to be used when parents or carers may have concerns or complaints about the use of a time out-strategy.
- 3.5. Any use of a time-out strategy must take into account factors such as the age, cultural background, individual needs, any disability and the developmental level of the student. The choice of time-out strategy will depend upon:
  - the seriousness or frequency of the behaviour
  - level of disruption to learning
  - risk of harm to the student or others
  - risk of damage to property.
- 3.6. Procedures for the use of time-out strategies should include clearly articulated steps to be followed if a student does not comply with the time-out strategy, or if the use of the time-out strategy has not been successful in managing the behaviour of the student.
- 3.7. Training should be provided to school staff in the appropriate implementation of time-out procedures.
- 3.8. [Non-Violent Crisis Intervention<sup>SM</sup> Training](#) (NCI) or PART<sup>TM</sup>, formerly known as Professional Assault Response Training, should be considered to equip staff with appropriate behaviour management skills to safely resolve situations where they may be confronted with anxious, hostile or violent behaviour.

#### 4. Dedicated Time-out Room

- 4.1. The use of a dedicated time-out room should only be implemented within the context of the school's discipline policy and following full consultation with the school community.
- 4.2. A dedicated time-out room should only be used with a student after less intrusive interventions, which have been implemented and documented, have not been successful in managing the behaviour.
- 4.3. The use of a dedicated time-out room should not be an alternative to suspension where the safety of students and staff are at risk. Risk management procedures should be implemented where there is a risk to the safety of students and/or staff.
- 4.4. The principal must ensure that parents or carers are notified on each occasion the dedicated time-out room is used with their child. This could be done by telephone, or by letter. [Appendix 1](#) provides a model for this notification.
- 4.5. A referral or re-referral to the Learning Support Team for the development or refinement of a plan to support the student's behaviour should be considered following the use of the dedicated time-out room

for a particular student. This plan should be developed or refined in consultation with the parents or carers, and documented.

**4.6.** A small number of students who have very complex needs may require specific, personalised learning and support when more general time-out procedures are not appropriate. These interventions, including any on-going use of a dedicated time-out room, may only be implemented if developed, monitored and reviewed by a case management team, consented to by the parents or carers and approved by the principal. The case management team may include the student, parents or carers, school and local Department of Education and Communities staff, health professionals and staff from other agencies or government departments.

**4.7.** A dedicated Time-out room must:

- be risk assessed in relation to student and staff safety, and be consistent with the Department's [Work Health and Safety Policy](#) and associated documents
- allow for meaningful educational activity to be provided for students
- have adequate ventilation, lighting and heat
- have adequate space for students and staff
- allow arrangements for the student to have recess, lunch and toilet breaks when appropriate if time-out occurs across these periods
- be conducive to de-escalating inappropriate behaviour
- not be locked, latched or secured in any way that would, in case of an emergency, prevent staff or the student from exiting the room
- be supervised at all times
- display rules for behaviour within the room
- display school rules and expectations
- display visual supports for de-escalation strategies and for appropriate behaviour.

[Appendix 2](#) provides a suggested checklist for the organisation of a dedicated time-out room.

**4.8.** The principal must ensure that a record of the use of the dedicated time-out room with each individual student and for each occasion is maintained. Data on the use of the dedicated time-out room with a particular student should be used by the Learning Support Team or Student Welfare Team to assess the effectiveness of the strategy in supporting the student.

[Appendix 3](#) provides the model for this record.

**4.9.** The principal must ensure that a register of the use of the dedicated time-out room is maintained. This register should record information on the number of times the dedicated time-out room has been used and the number of students with whom the dedicated time out room has been used. A copy of this register should be forwarded to the Director, Public Schools NSW each semester. Data on the use of the dedicated time-out room should be used by the school community to assess the effectiveness of the strategy within the context of the regular review of the school's discipline policy.

[Appendix 4](#) provides a model for this register.

\_\_\_\_\_ **School**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This letter is to inform you about the use of the Time-out Room today with your son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_ of Year \_\_\_\_\_ consistent with the School Discipline Policy.

The Time-out Room was used with your son/daughter between \_\_\_\_\_ (time) and \_\_\_\_\_ (time) because:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ has been referred/re-referred to the Learning Support Team for the development/refinement of a support plan for his/her behaviour. Your participation in this process is very welcome.

Please sign the slip below and return it to school with your son or daughter. Alternatively, the form can be faxed to \_\_\_\_\_ or emailed to the school at \_\_\_\_\_.

Yours  
sincerely,  
Principal

\_\_\_\_\_

I would like to be involved in the development/refinement of a support plan for my son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_ **Y or N**

I would like to be involved by: (please tick)

- attendance at a meeting to discuss the plan
- discussion by telephone
- sending some information in writing or by email

Signed (Parent / Caregiver) \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Return to:** \_\_\_\_\_

### The Use of a Dedicated Time-Out Room

- Has been endorsed by the school community and incorporated as part of a continuum of behavioural interventions in the school discipline policy
- Has been risk assessed in relation to student and staff safety, and is consistent with the Department's [Work Health and Safety Policy](#) and associated documents
- Allows for meaningful educational activity to be provided for students
- Has adequate ventilation, lighting and heat
- Has adequate space for students and staff
- Allows arrangements for the student to have recess, lunch and toilet breaks when time occurs across those periods
- Is conducive to de-escalating inappropriate behaviours
- Is not to be locked, latched or secured in any way that would, in case of an emergency, prevent staff or the student from exiting the room
- Is supervised at all times
- Displays rules for behaviour within the room
- Displays school rules and expectations
- Displays visual supports for de-escalation strategies and for appropriate behaviour.

### Communication and Evaluation

- Procedures for the use of time-out have been communicated to all students, parents and carers and school staff
- Training has been conducted for school staff in procedures for the use of the dedicated time-out room
- A record of the use of the dedicated time-out room with each individual student and for each occasion is maintained
- Procedures for notifying parents or carers of the use of the time out room with their child have been developed
- Procedures for referral or re-referral to the Learning Support Team have been developed
- A register of the use of the dedicated time-out room is maintained and forwarded to the Director, Public Schools NSW each semester
- Procedures to be followed if a student does not comply with the use of the time-out room, or if the use of the use of the time-out room is not successful in managing the behaviour of the student, have been developed
- Data on the use of the time-out room is used to assess its effectiveness in supporting an individual student
- Data on the use of the time-out room is used to assess the effectiveness of the strategy within the context of the regular review of the school's discipline policy



### Time-Out Room Return

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of individual uses of the Time-Out Room: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of students with whom the Time-out Room was used: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

Forwarded to Director, Public Schools NSW on: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Signature: \_\_\_\_\_