

# Teacher's Guide

Supporting the wellbeing of primary school children

## Physical activity



Physical activity is effective in preventing and relieving stress, improve a student's sense of control, coping ability, distract from negative thoughts and improve cognitive function.

Scheduling regular and structured physical activity can improve attention and mood, develop positive self-esteem, resilience and provide opportunities to socialise and gain social support. Sustained involvement in structured physical activity may offer benefits to motor, cognitive, social, wellbeing and behavioural functioning.

### Scheduling physical activities into the daily routine

Structured activity for as little as ten minutes a day can have positive benefits of the mood of students. Try to structure a range of structured and free play group activities into each school day. Both aerobic and non-aerobic activities for examples: walking, running, ball games, yoga stretches.

Scheduling physical activities after lunch when problem solving abilities are often poorer can help refocus students and reduce the chances of distraction. Physical Education lessons of medium to high complexity have been shown to benefit on-task behaviour in following lessons.

### Use exercise to refocus

In situations where a student or student group is distracted or disruptive a brief exercise session may be enough to help students calm down and refocus. The brief exercise session may just involve moving the body whilst standing and stretching, working around their desk or sitting and doing shoulder shrugs or shaking arms and legs.

### Cater for motor development and sensory sensitivities

Ensure appropriateness of the physical activity for the student's motor development and sensory sensitivities. Provide specific support for a student who may not feel comfortable about being in a group situation. For some students it may be necessary to progressively introduce physical activity and build intensity and duration as the student builds confidence and physical endurance.

***If the behaviour persists despite trying a number of interventions, discuss the student's situation with a supervisor or member of the learning and wellbeing support staff at your school.***

<https://www.islhd.health.nsw.gov.au/services-clinics/school-link-teachers-guide>