

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

- Scheduling physical activities into the daily routine for example, after lunch when problem solving abilities are often poorer can help refocus students and reduce the chances of distraction. Try to structure free play, group activities and both aerobic and non-aerobic organised physical activities e.g. walking, running, ball games, climbing, etc. into the student's daily routine.
- Exercise sessions can be brief and just involve moving the body whilst standing or sitting e.g. shoulder shrugs or shaking arms and legs.
- 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>