

How can I support my students to sit well in class?



Who is this information for?

Teachers, teaching assistants, parents (useful for homework and meal times etc).

Which students may need support to sit well?

All students need to sit well. If a student has to concentrate on sitting well this will make it hard to concentrate on their school work at the same time. The following students may need support:

- Students with low muscle tone (often seen in children who slump at their desk, or wrap their legs around their chair legs) to increase comfort and stability
- Students learning to stay focused (can sometimes be seen fidgeting or getting up from their chair)
- Students learning to write or progress with writing
- Students using a computer

What can I do and how will this help?

By making changes to the classroom environment the student will be able to feel more comfortable completing their schoolwork. This will help the student to complete their schoolwork with more ease. The suggestions below will help to **increase** the student's **comfort, focus** and **work produced**.

■ Does the student need their table swapping?

Students should be able to place their elbows around 90 degrees to the table. A table too high and the student may find it difficult to control a pen or pencil or type on a keyboard. A table too low and the student might slump over the desk, causing a poor posture. A height adjustable table may be needed.

■ Does the student need their chair swapping?

Students should be able to place their feet flat on the floor when sitting on their chair (knees and ankles at 90 degree angles). This will enable them to sit comfortably. A chair too high and feet may dangle and the student will focus their attention on trying to balance. A chair too low and they may not be able to reach the table.

■ Does the student need a footrest?

If a more appropriate chair is not available and the student's feet do not touch the floor, place an upturned box or similar under their feet as a rest.

■ **Does the student need to improve their position at the desk?**

Make sure the student's chair is tucked in close to the table so that their tummy is almost touching the table, and their back is well supported in the chair. This will help to promote a good upright sitting posture.

■ **Does the left handed student need to sit in a different position in the class?**

Left handed students should avoid sitting on the right side of the table next to a right handed student as both will be using writing hands next to each other leading to possible bumping of arms and impacting on handwriting. Sit a left handed student on the left side of the table.

■ **Does the child need to use a move n sit cushion?**

Students working hard to sit upright at the table may have low muscle tone. Providing them with a move n sit cushion can help to place them in a more upright position by tilting their pelvis forwards. This gives a better position for completing table top work.



Also students who need to fidget to help them concentrate and complete work can move around on the air filled cushion. This helps them without distracting other students sat at their table.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on equipment, see the following websites or search for other suppliers:

Move n sit cushions (available in two sizes):

www.specialdirect.com

Height adjustable tables

www.morleys.co.uk

Contact us for further advice and to tell us what you think of this information:

**Children's Occupational Therapy Service
Integrated Children with Additional Needs (ICAN)**

Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust

3rd Floor, Stockdale House

Headingley Office Park

Victoria Road

Leeds LS6 1PF

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