

How can I support my students to stay focused in class?



Who is this information for?

Teachers, teaching assistants, parents (for support with homework).

Which students may need support with this?

Students who:

- Are working towards getting started more promptly with school work
- Are working towards keeping going with school work
- 'Switch off' and 'daydream'
- Are easily distractible
- Are fidgety

What can I do and how will this help?

Students need the best classroom environment to be able to complete their school work and demonstrate their full potential. For some students **changing a teaching environment** to meet their learning needs, can help to address the above.

■ Does the student need fewer visual distractions?

Most students enjoy lots of pictures in the classroom and use many of the visual aids around them to support their learning. However, it can prove a little 'too much' for some students. These students can struggle to select only that which is relevant. Some students can find themselves getting distracted by the resources available and therefore 'tuning out' of the lesson. You can support the student by:

- Placing their desk away from wall displays
- Having a quiet workstation with built up sides to filter out distractions
- Thinking about who would be a good working partner to sit with

■ Does the student need a movement break?

Some students need to do something a little more physical to keep their attention levels up. This is often seen in the fidgety behaviour displayed in the classroom. For example when an adult is feeling tired they may have a coffee as a 'pick me up'. This boost helps an adult to think and complete a task. Teachers can **provide students with appropriate opportunities** to boost their alert levels to help them focus and complete their school work. Examples include having the student:



- Take a note to another teacher
- Collect in and hand out resources
- Wipe down tables and tidy up
- Complete a physical activity out of the classroom such as running or playing with a ball (if an adult is available to support them)

■ Does the student need to be seated near you?

This can help you to ensure that when giving out class instructions you know they are focusing and taking in the information.

■ Does the student need to be asked to repeat the instructions back to you?

This will help to ensure that the student has both listened and understood the information correctly.

■ Does the student need to have the information written down for them?

Enabling the student to refer back to the information when they have lost their concentration will help them find their place in their work. Providing a list to tick off can be motivating and help students to keep focused.

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

If the student needs to move or fidget to keep alert levels up but needs to remain in their seat, this allows a subtle but constant movement.



■ Does the student need to have something to fiddle with?

Some children are able to divide their attention and need to touch something to help keep their attention levels up in order to concentrate. This could be a piece of blue tack or a paperclip for example.

■ Does the student need a timer?

Having a visual support to keep focused such as a sand timer can be motivating and help students to understand the concept of time, i.e 'you have five minutes to complete your work' can be difficult for some students to understand. Seeing the time pass can be motivating to attend to and complete school work.



Where can I get more information?

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

Move n sit cushions (available in two sizes):
www.specialdirect.com

Fidget pencils available from:
www.ldlearning.com

Portable workstations available from:
www.specialdirect.com

Timers:
www.specialdirect.com

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
 Tel: 0113 843 3620

Email: central.spa1@nhs.net