



Aim High

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USE OF SENSORY TOOLS IN SCHOOL POLICY

Ratified By	School Effectiveness
Date	13/07/2026
Minute	8
Review Date	Summer 2030
Policy Statement	
What is the policy for?	All parent/carers considering Norwood Primary School as an educational setting for their child.
Who has devised and contributed to this policy?	The documentation is published by Allergy UK
How will this policy be communicated?	The information is available on the school's website and a copy is available from the school office.
How will this policy be monitored?	This is the responsibility of the Local Authority
Which other policies are linked to this policy?	n/a

Policy intention

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidelines regarding the use of sensory resources and other auxiliary aids, such as, fidgets, chew tools, ear defenders, sensory cushion.

This policy aims to ensure that the use of such tools is beneficial for identified pupils in a classroom whilst maintaining a conducive learning environment for everyone.

These tools have become popular support aids for children with Autism Spectrum Condition, ADHD, Sensory Processing Disorder, anxiety, and other additional needs.

Although fidgets may appear fun and enjoyable, for many pupils with SEND they can serve a beneficial purpose in supporting pupils' regulation and attention by offering sensory stimulation, reducing stress, improving focus, and helping pupils to regulate during periods of high anxiety.

Under the Equality Act 2010, schools must take reasonable steps to prevent disabled pupils from being placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to their peers. This can include providing auxiliary aids (e.g., fidget tools, chew tools, ear defenders) if these reduce barriers to learning. The SEND Code of Practice (2015) also states that reasonable adjustments should be anticipatory, systematic, and individualised.

A sensory regulation tool is likely to be a reasonable adjustment when:

- the pupil has a disability that substantially affects self-regulation, attention, sensory processing or anxiety;
- the tool clearly reduces distress or increases access to learning;
- the cost is low and the adjustment is practical;
- the tool doesn't create health or safety risks;
- staff can manage its use within routines.

Schools don't have to provide one if:

- the child is not disabled (under the Equality Act definition);
- the need is based on preference, not disadvantage;

- the item would pose a safety or hygiene issue;
- the tool worsens behaviour or distracts other pupils;
- a more suitable or safer alternative is available;
- it becomes high-cost or requires specialist staffing.

This policy applies to all pupils, staff, parents/carers, and visitors.

- Sensory/fidget/chew tools are therapeutic aids and should always be seen as supports for learning — not toys;
- They will be authorised, by the SENDCo, to support regulation and learning when evidence shows an individual benefit;
- This policy applies to all pupils with sensory needs, attention differences, or additional SEND needs.

Authorisation

- Initial request can be made by a parent, the child's class teacher, or the pupil raises a need;
- Use of a sensory tool will only be approved by the SENDCo, in agreement with parents, after brief trial;
- The SENDCo will seek additional advice for individual pupils from external agency professionals, including: Occupational Therapists, Sensory Integration Practitioners, or Speech and Language Therapists, as required.
- If agreed, in discussion with SENDCo and class teacher, the child will read and sign a sensory tool 'contract' which will explain expectations of use. Sensory tool contracts are intended for pupils who can understand and accept the responsibilities associated with sensory tool use.
- Where a pupil's receptive language, cognitive development, or communication needs prevent them from meaningfully engaging with the agreement, staff will determine and support sensory tool use through individualised assessment and professional judgement.
- The school leadership team ratifies whole-school parameters.

Approved item criteria

- Quiet, small, discrete, non-toxic, no loose small parts, easy to clean.
- Chew tools must be made for oral use, food-safe silicone etc.

A good sensory tool should:

- Be quiet and safe;
- Be used without looking, so the child can still focus on the lesson;
- Stay out of other children's line of sight, avoiding distractions;
- Meet the child's individual sensory needs (some crave textures, others avoid them);
- Fit the child's physical abilities (if they can't manipulate it easily, it's not helpful);
- Be affordable and durable.

Permitted sensory tools:

- stress ball;
- silent putty / blu-tac;
- textured strip;
- tangle / twisting blocks;
- small smooth pebble;
- chewable silicone necklaces or bracelets (certified food-safe);
- ear defenders;
- resistance band/theraband;
- wobble cushion.

Sensory tools will be removed if:

- there is a risk of injury to the user or others due to mis-use;
- the tool makes noises, is visually distracting, or causes distraction to self, other others, including peers and staff;
- the tool poses a risk of damage to classroom equipment and clothing;

Some possible alternatives:

- Some children might need movement but find fidgets/chews too distracting.

Instead, consider:

- sitting on a wobble cushion;
- providing Theraband on chair legs for foot movement;
- offering movement breaks between tasks;
- sensory circuits BEFORE the learning demand.

Ear defenders support children with sensory processing differences, anxiety, autism, or auditory hypersensitivity from being put at a substantial disadvantage.

- they are low cost;
- they enable access in assemblies, dining rooms, PE halls;
- they reduce distress and prevent dysregulation;
- they have minimal impact on others.

Schools may decline if:

- the child is not disabled under the Equality Act;
- they compromise safeguarding (e.g., the child cannot hear instructions in high-risk situations, such as certain lessons, PE, transitions, walking near roads);
- they block essential learning input during teacher instruction;
- they are misused (e.g., during tests when they would give a significant advantage);
- they prevent inclusion if worn all day as a default.

In such cases, alternative quieter spaces or a sensory plan may be used instead.

Children who may benefit from a sensory adaptation:

- Those who need extra/less sensory input to concentrate;
- Those who fidget to self-regulate when overwhelmed;
- Hypervigilant children who need grounding and body feedback;
- Children who pick at skin, bite nails, or engage in self-stimulatory behaviours as a way to self-regulate;
- A sensory tool may not be the most suitable or appropriate alternative and may require professional advice e.g. GP, Occupational Therapist (OT) or Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT).

Hygiene and safety

- chew tools are for single-users only;
- chew tools must be stored in a clearly named box/container for individuals;
- cleaned daily per manufacturer/NHS guidance;
- consider dental advice if heavy chewing.

When and where permissible

- Some parts of the school day may be more fidget-friendly than others. Consider allowing fidgets during: Listening to new teaching concepts; silent or independent work; moments where extra concentration is needed.

But they may not be suitable for:

- Group discussions;
- Writing tasks where both hands are needed;
- Playtime where they might cause issues in the playground (getting lost, traded, stolen!);
- Teacher may withdraw use if distracting.

Trial and monitoring

- 2–4 week trial with simple monitoring form: baseline on-task / disruption observations, teacher comments, pupil self-report (if appropriate);
- If no benefit or increase in distraction, stop and try alternatives;
- Does this meet the child's sensory needs?
- Can they use it without disrupting themselves or others?
- Is there a better way to provide the input they need?

Record keeping

- Record on SEND Pupil Passport and, if appropriate, in EHCP provisions or support plan.
- Include review date.

Sensory Tools in School: Staff Guide

Supporting regulation and focus through appropriate use of auxiliary aids, such as, fidget and chew tools, ear defenders.

Purpose

This guide supports staff in understanding when and how to use sensory tools appropriately to help pupils self-regulate and maintain focus. It applies to pupils with sensory needs, attention differences, or additional SEND needs. These tools should always be seen as supports for learning — not toys.

Fidget Tools (to support self-regulation and focus)



Fidget tools are small manipulatives that children can use (often with hands, feet, etc.) to allow movement, stimulation, or a sensory outlet.

Examples:

- stress ball
- silent putty / blu-tac
- textured strip
- chair resistance band
- tangle / twisting blocks
- small smooth pebble.

Purpose:

- to support movement needs, sensory regulation, and sustained attention during seated or listening tasks.

Authorisation:

- SENDCo agreement after brief trial.
- SENDCo meeting with parents and child.

Use guidelines:

- Quiet, small, subtle tools from SENDCo only.
- Used during listening or seated tasks where movement helps regulation.
- Withdrawn if distracting to user or peers.
- If sensory tool has proven effective following trial, review every term (or sooner if required), updating Pupil Passport.
- Not for play or trading.
- "I can use this when I'm doing X; I will stop if it distracts me or others."
- Provide guidance on how/when to use them, what counts as acceptable use, etc
- Does not go outside for break/lunch time or PE lessons.

Cheew Tools (for oral sensory regulation)

Cheew tools (or 'cheewellery') are items designed to be chewed safely (for children who chew on non-food or non-safe objects), providing oral sensory input that might help with regulation, focus, or calming. These are often used especially for children with neurodivergent profiles (e.g. ADHD, autism, sensory processing differences) or with special educational needs (SEND).

Examples:

- chewable silicone necklaces or bracelets (certified food-safe).

Purpose:

- to provide oral sensory input for pupils who chew non-safe items (e.g. sleeves, pencils).
- cheew tools provide a safer, more socially acceptable, predictable alternative. This helps protect hands, uniforms, objects, and may help the child feel more regulated.

Authorisation:

- SENDCo must approve.
- Where required, advice from an Occupational Therapist (OT) or Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT) will be sought.

Use guidelines:

- Single-user only – box/cup labelled with pupil's name.
- Cleaned daily or as recommended by manufacturer.
- Used only when needed for regulation (not constant chewing).
- Does not go outside for break/lunch time or PE lessons.

- Staff monitor for safety, wear, or damage.
- Reviewed each term by class teacher, SENCo and parent/carer
- “I can use this when I’m doing X; I will stop if it distracts me or others.”

Monitoring and Consent

1. Before approving a sensory tool, class teacher to discuss request with SENDCo.
2. Class teaching team to monitor and trial for 2–4 weeks with observation notes on focus, regulation, and impact on learning. Monitor both behaviour and attainment.
3. Monitor novelty effect: initial benefits may fade as novelty wears off — watch for this.
4. Class teaching team then discuss outcomes with SENDCo. If positive, SENDCo will meet with parents and child, add to the child’s Pupil Passport.
5. Class teaching team and SENDCo will continue to monitor both behaviour and attainment.

Hygiene and Safety

- Chew tools must be made of non-toxic, BPA-free materials.
- Replace if worn, cracked, or discoloured.
- Fidget tools should not be shared without cleaning.
- Store tools in labelled sensory boxes or trays when not in use.

Pupil contract for use of fidget/chew tools

I, (insert name) _____ agree to use my fidget/chew tool in a way that helps me learn, stay focused, and be respectful to others. By reading and signing below, I promise to follow these expectations:

- Fidget tools in the classroom are learning tools and not toys - its use is to help me focus, not to distract me or others.
- I will use my fidget tool quietly so no one else is distracted - if it makes a noise, I will stop using it.
- I will keep my fidget **in my hands and on my lap** or **in my hand and on the table** - it should not be seen easily by others as this will cause distraction.
- I will only use my fidget tool when I need it - I will put it away in my drawer/box when I don't need it.
- I will not take my fidget/chew tool outside of the classroom, unless agreed with my teacher or TA.
- I will be responsible - if my fidget tool starts to become a distraction or misused, I understand that it might be put away by my teacher or TA, until I am ready to use it again.
- If my fidget/chew tool breaks, then I will let my teacher or TA know straightaway so we can work out what to do next.
- If my fidget/chew tool isn't helping me learn, then it is not meeting my needs and I will let my teacher or TA know.

Name:

Signed:

Date: