



# 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- Withdrawn if distracting to user or peers.
- Reviewed every 4 weeks using monitoring form.
- 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.

## Chew Tools (for oral sensory regulation)

Chew tools (or ‘chewelry’) 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).
- chew 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 possible, 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 half term by SENDCo/parent.
- “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 support plan and SEND provision map.
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.