



The Ark Federation

Fidget and Sensory Tool Policy

At The Ark Federation, we recognise that some pupils may benefit from the use of fidget tools (sometimes referred to as sensory or concentration aids) to help maintain focus, support self-regulation, and promote inclusion within the classroom. This policy outlines how fidget tools may be used appropriately so they remain purposeful learning supports rather than sources of distraction.

Aims

- To enable pupils who require fidget tools for educational or medical reasons to use them effectively.
- To maintain a calm, positive learning environment for all children by reducing unnecessary disruption.
- To ensure a consistent and fair approach to the use of fidget tools across the Federation.

Definition

Fidget tools are small, handheld objects designed to keep a pupil's hands occupied in a quiet and unobtrusive way, supporting concentration and regulation.

Research Summary

Evidence indicates that many commercially marketed fidget toys—such as spinners or complex gadgets—do not reliably improve focus or learning (Croley et al., 2018; Graziano et al., 2018). Some research further highlights that highly visual or fast-moving items can actually increase distraction for both the user and their peers (Stalvey & Brasell, 2006; Carter et al., 2017).

Fidget tools that tend to be most effective are simple, discreet, and provide gentle tactile feedback. Examples include smooth stones, stress balls, or small textured materials, which support sensory regulation without diverting attention from teaching and learning.

Guidelines for Use

- Fidget tools may only be used by pupils with a clearly identified need, such as one documented in a learning plan, EHCP or recommended by an educational psychologist or medical professional.
- Fidget tools will be agreed between the pupil, parents/carers, SENDco and class teacher.
- Tools must be small, silent, and not visually distracting.
- Fidget tools are learning aids—not play items—and should not be used for games or social interaction.
- Fidget tools are for individual use only and should not be shared with other pupils.

These guidelines also apply to other sensory tools or aids, which may include chew toys/necklaces and ear defenders.

Use in Classrooms

- Teachers will remind pupils that fidget tools must not distract others or interfere with learning.
- If a tool becomes distracting, the teacher may request that it is put away.
- Fidget tools are not allowed during practical lessons (e.g., PE or science experiments) unless specifically agreed with the teacher.

Fidget Tools Provided by the School

The Ark Federation can provide pupils with sensory pebbles for use in class. Where a fidget tool from home has been agreed, the school cannot take responsibility for any loss or damage.



Parental Partnership and Understanding

Parents and carers are asked to understand that staff may occasionally request that a fidget tool be put down if it is having a negative impact on the pupil's engagement or focus. The professional judgement of teaching staff should be respected in these situations.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **School Leadership Team:** Ensure the policy is followed consistently and reviewed regularly.
- **Teachers:** Monitor the use of fidget and sensory tools, ensure they are used appropriately, and communicate with parents and the SENCO where needed.
- **Parents/Carers:** Support the Federation's approach and reinforce appropriate use of fidget and sensory tools at home.
- **Pupils:** Use fidget and sensory tools sensibly and follow teacher instructions at all times.

This policy will be reviewed annually alongside the Federation's SEND Information Reports.