

# Teacher's Guide

Supporting the wellbeing of primary school children

## Classroom set-up



Structuring the physical classroom environment can assist students who are easily distracted or have difficulty with social interactions.

Some children are more sensitive to environmental cues than others. It may be helpful to work with the parents / carers and student to determine which stimuli may trigger behaviours in the school setting, or if certain times of the day are harder for the student, stress, tiredness and strong emotional responses to events are all possible triggers. Discuss what has worked in the past to eliminate, avoid or alter some of these disruptive behaviours.

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### Adjust the environment

By reducing environmental cues or triggers where possible, for example if a child is sensitive to rainy days, the teacher can lower the blinds to reduce the visibility of the trigger.

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### Provide warnings

Before altering the environment let students know, for example; that the lights will be turned off for a screen presentation.

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### Manage classroom layout

Position each student in a seat that best supports their needs. If easily distracted, facing away from doors or windows to decrease potential distractions.

For students requiring more attention place them in a seat near the front of the room or in a position where it is easy for the teacher to intervene.

The back of the room may be better for students who are uncomfortable in a group situation.

Tables in rows assists students in staying on task, small group tables encourage working together and social interaction.

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### Reduce distractions

Find a balance in the amount of visual stimulation on the classroom walls and on students' desks. A less stimulating environment can add to a student's sense of comfort and security and reduce distractibility.

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### Manage classroom noise

Ambient noise makes listening difficult for many students, especially for students with attention difficulties and may negatively affect focus and academic performance. Ensure classroom noise is managed especially when providing verbal instruction.

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### Replace fluorescent lights

Although energy efficient, fluorescent lights do not provide the best quality of light for learning and can be too bright for some students. Students in classroom with full-spectrum lighting including natural daylight, experience less stress, improved behaviour and academic achievement.

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### Moderate room temperature

Overly warm classrooms may cause drowsiness, inability to concentrate, aggression and general lethargy. Overly cold classrooms can affect concentration and productivity.

***If the behaviour persists despite trying a number of interventions, discuss the student's situation with a supervisor or member of the learning and wellbeing support staff at your school.***

<https://www.islhd.health.nsw.gov.au/services-clinics/school-link-teachers-guide>