

Kingsthorpe College

Fidget Toys & Sensory Regulation in School

A Guide for Staff and Parents

What does research tell us?

Research suggests that for some neurodiverse students, controlled sensory movement can help regulate the nervous system, supporting attention and emotional readiness to learn. Studies indicate that proprioceptive and tactile input — such as handling a small object — may reduce anxiety and help sustain focus during sedentary tasks.

However, research also recognises that fidget tools are not universally beneficial and can create distraction for both the individual and those around them. Effectiveness depends on the type of fidget, the context, and whether its use has been purposefully agreed as part of a student's support plan.

Other Regulation Strategies in School

Fidget toys are just one approach. Students are encouraged to explore discreet, classroom-appropriate strategies:

- ✓ Discrete sensory silk or textured fabric kept in a pocket
- ✓ Finger mantras (pressing each finger whilst silently repeating a calming phrase)
- ✓ Breathing exercises (e.g. box breathing, 4-7-8 breathing)
- ✓ Reading pleasurable content for brief mindful breaks
- ✓ Mindful colouring during low-demand tasks or form time

Fidget / Strategy	Photo	Accepted?	Conditions / Notes
Blue-tac		YES	Blue tac recommended as the standard 'normal way of working' for SEND students, including JCQ requirements for KS4 GCSE exams. Discrete, silent, and non-disruptive. Must be approved by SEND team prior to use, noted on SEND Students ILP and recorded for exam access arrangements.
Acupressure Sensory Rings		YES	Fidget rings recommended as the standard 'normal way of working' for KS4 SEND students, including JCQ requirements for KS4 GCSE exams. Discrete, silent, and non-disruptive. Will be noted on SEND Students ILP and noted for exam access arrangements. Will act as one piece of jewellery under uniform requirements within R2L.
Discrete Fidget Toy		YES	A small, silent fidget toy is accepted where formally agreed on SEND student's ILP. Approved by SEND team prior to use.
Sensory / Tactile Fidget (silent, solid)		YES	Silent sensory fidgets (e.g. smooth or textured tiles, solid rings, solid rubber items) are accepted. Will be noted on a SEND ILP. Must be approved by SENDCo / SEND team prior to use.
Squeezable / Water-filled Fidgets		NO	These items have split in lessons, causing significant disruption to students and staff and halting learning.
Bead-filled Fidgets		NO	Beads have burst and scattered across classrooms, causing distraction and safety risks.
Noisy / Clicking Fidgets		NO	Fidgets that make clicking, popping, or any audible noise are disruptive to other students and teachers.

Our Shared Commitment

Kingsthorpe College recognises that regulation is central to the wellbeing and academic progress of our students — particularly for teenage girls navigating the additional demands of adolescence and neurodiverse learning profiles. We are committed to supporting every student to feel safe and ready to learn. At the same time, it is equally important that our classrooms remain calm, focused environments where all students and teachers can thrive. Any regulation strategy must be discreet, agreed through the appropriate support planning process, and considerate of the whole school community.

Questions or referrals: please contact the SEND Team via email: senco@kingsthorpecollege.org.uk