

# Guidance on the use of Quiet Rooms in Warwickshire Schools

(Please refer to separate guidance on the  
use of Low Arousal Areas)

## Definitions of terms used in this guidance

**Quiet Room** - a room that offers a pupil an opportunity to calm during the school day.

**Low Arousal Area** - a modified area identified within a school that offers a low sensory working environment (**please refer to Guidance on the use of Low Arousal Areas**).

### 1. Overview comment

Separate guidance in respect of the use of Quiet Rooms and Low Arousal Areas has been developed in order to address confusion over the appropriate use of these two very different resources.

'Low Arousal Rooms' were installed in some schools to offer children with autism an environment that was low in stimulation (people, sounds, light, noise, movement). These were designed to allow the pupil to access learning away from the overload of a mainstream classroom. Often the pupils who accessed these rooms presented behaviour that was challenging to manage when they were in their classrooms. This often led to those pupils being taught away from their classrooms for most of their school day. In best examples the pupil had a 'mixed economy', sometimes in the Low Arousal Room, other times in class.

Low Arousal Rooms have also been used to allow pupils to calm in some instances.

It is therefore important to make a clear distinction between the use of the two resources and to ensure consistency in what they are called and how they are used.

**This policy relates to the use of a room to allow a pupil to calm as safely and effectively as possible.**

### 2. Best Practice for use of Quiet Rooms in schools

There are times when children need access to a quiet and calm space. A Quiet Room is a sensory-controlled calming area. The purpose of a Quiet Room is not exclusion or

punishment. Rather, it is a space to help children to calm down and to begin to use self-regulation skills.

In the majority of cases the use of a Quiet Room should form part of a pupil's individual behaviour plan and should be agreed by the school leadership and parents/carers and their agreement recorded. Children and young people should be consulted in accordance with their age and level of understanding.

In optimum circumstances the pupil will choose to access the Quiet Room, sometimes with a prompt from staff. In exceptional circumstances when the pupil is unable to make this informed choice, staff may be required to accompany the pupil to the Quiet Room using agreed positive handling strategies.

The Quiet Room should only be used after in-class strategies have failed to calm the pupil. A decision to use physical intervention to support the pupil in accessing the Quiet Room should be based upon a dynamic risk assessment. The use of force is likely to be legally defensible when it is required to prevent:

- self-harming
- injury to other children, service-users, staff or teachers
- damage to property
- an offence being committed and
- in school settings, any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline within the school or among any of its pupils.

In these instances the Quiet Room can be used as a means of

- (a) helping the pupil to manage their own emotional state;
- (b) reducing the danger to staff/pupils and or removing the disruptive behaviour from the body of the school;
- (c) reducing the need for prolonged use of physical intervention.

In this policy it is anticipated that staff dealing with the pupil are fully aware and competent in communicating effectively with the pupil. This could be through PECS, Makaton, use of visual cues or verbal communication; this will be included in the behaviour plan.

### **3. What should be in a Quiet Room?**

The Quiet Room is not a teaching room. It is a place of safety and should create a calming environment for the pupil. Lights should be low. Cushions, mattresses, bean bags could be used for pupils who need to lie down. Soft blankets and covers can be

helpful to pupils who like to cover themselves up. In some cases, the school may choose to have soft padding on walls for further protection for pupils who are very agitated. Staff must be able to see the child at all times. Outside windows need to be tinted. Radiators must be covered (boxed in). It may be helpful to use music but speakers must be flush to the wall.

#### **4. Helping pupils to understand how to use the Quiet Room**

1. Introduce the Quiet Room in a positive, proactive way that helps the child to understand the benefits that can come from its usage.
2. Explain to the child that the room can be used when she/he becomes aware that she/he is starting to get upset, get worried or get angry. Use language that is simple and positively stated.
3. Explain that the Quiet Room will be for them when they are in it.
4. Staff should avoid entering the Quiet Room unless absolutely necessary, i.e. to keep the child safe, or unless the child has asked the adult to join them in the room.
5. The Quiet Room should not be used on a 'scheduled' basis. It is meant to be used as and when a child is starting to show signs that they may become upset or demonstrating that they need a break to avoid a critical incident and to regain a sense of calm.
6. The best outcome of using a Quiet Room is when a child learns how to 'self-regulate' independently and is able to calm her/himself down.
7. The Quiet Room needs to be used with a calm and positive approach in order to help reduce anxiety. This means using a planned and sensitive manner to help the child move towards the room and during and after they have spent time there.
8. When introducing the Quiet Room initially, the child should be asked to spend five to ten minutes in there. They can lie down on something comfortable if they want to (e.g. a bean bag, specially provided mattress, etc.) or they can stand and move around if they want to. This introduction session should be used in a proactive manner, when the child is calm and receptive, in order to help her/him feel good about being there.
9. Following several sessions when the child has been able to spend time in the room while in a pleasant and quiet frame of mind, the next step is to explain to

the child that the Quiet Room will also be available when they need a place to calm down, help them stop worrying or help them to feel less angry.

10. It is important to explain that sometimes a member of staff will suggest that 'this is a good time to use the Quiet Room' or the child themselves may feel that 'this is a good time to use the Quiet Room'.
11. Staff should then be alert to warning signs that the child may need a break and remind the child that this may be a good time to use the Quiet Room.

## **5. Procedure for the use of the Quiet Room**

1. When a member of staff notices that a pupil is becoming anxious or agitated, the pupil should be given reasonable opportunity to calm using the strategies detailed in the school's behaviour policy or in the pupil's individual behaviour plan.
2. If the pupil's behaviour continues to cause concern and is reaching a point where they are affecting other pupils and/or they become a danger to themselves, other pupils or staff, the pupil should be prompted to make 'the right choice' and comply with requests from staff.
3. Other staff should be alerted for support as appropriate.
4. If the pupil continues not to comply, staff should suggest 'this is a good time to use the Quiet Room'.
5. If the pupil continues not to comply and, subject to a dynamic risk assessment, one of the five legally defensible criteria (as in section 2 above) apply, staff may consider it necessary to escort the child to the Quiet Room using an approved physical intervention in line with school policy, WCC's 'Guidance on the Use of Force and Physical Intervention' and the law.
6. Once in the Quiet Room and away from the body of the school, staff involved should try to resolve the situation satisfactorily with the child spending the minimum time necessary in the Quiet Room.
7. When the Quiet Room has been used, the incident must be recorded appropriately in line with school policy.
8. While a child is in the Quiet Room, senior staff should ensure that appropriate staffing is available to support the child.

**At no time should pupils be unsupervised in a Quiet Room. It may be appropriate to allow the child to calm on their own but staff must be able to see the child via a window.**

**At no time should pupils be locked in a Quiet Room.**

**If a pupil tries to leave the Quiet Room before they are calm, staff should use low and slow responses to direct the pupil to stay. In extreme cases when the pupil is very angry and unable to process requests, staff may need to implement a dynamic risk assessment (please also refer to WCC's 'Guidance on the Use of Force and Physical Intervention' as above).**

**This response must be recorded after the event in line with school policy. If this becomes a regular requirement it must be included in the pupil's individual behaviour plan.**

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