HAMMERSMITH ACADEMY

November 2026



Focus tools guidance

Focus Tools (Fidget) Guidance for Teachers and Parents

At HA, our goal is to support the children who truly benefit to ensure classrooms stay calm, fair and distraction-free for everyone.

*** Research has shown that brightly coloured, moving or noisy items - most notably spinners are not effective.** They tend to lower attention and inhibit academic performance for both the user and their classmates.

Quiet and subtle tools may genuinely help some learners, especially those with sensory or attention needs. Occupational Therapists' guidance recommends silent, tactile, non-visual tools, used with clear routines.

At HA, we recommend a limited number of tools:

- Soft stress/gel balls (non-breakable – without beads or items inside)
- Silicone pencil toppers
- Small textured strip
- Textured (worry) stones or rubber textured rings
- Small, pea sized amount of Blu tac

All focus tools **MUST be reviewed and approved** by members of Inclusion with the Pastoral Teams – their use will be then appropriately recorded and monitored.

All tools must be:

- Silent
- Used below the desk / in the pocket
- Not shared or swapped
- Put away when not needed.

***Please note that tools which fail to comply to this guidance and/or cause disruption or distraction will be confiscated by teachers and/or the Pastoral Team.**

If you would like advice on suitability of a product prior to purchase or to discuss alternatives, please contact the SENCo or Pastoral Team.

Further Reading

These accessible sources support the thinking behind our policy:

Why some fidgets help — and others hinder

Edutopia: "Do Fidgets Help Students Focus?"
Explains how visually engaging toys (especially spinners) reduce attention for the user and peers. [edutopia.org]
Graziano et al. (2018)
Found fidget spinners lowered attention even for children with ADHD.
https://self-regulationlab.fiu.edu/fidgetarticlegraziano.pdf

When fidgets can work well

Mathews et al. (ERIC study)
Simple tactile tools increased on-task behaviour when routines were taught.
https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1272882.pdf
Meta-analysis (2024)
Fidgets only show positive effects when used carefully and consistently.
https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s43494-024-00133-0

Practical OT guidance

OT Toolbox: Quiet Fidget Tools
Why the most effective fidgets are silent and subtle.
https://www.theottoolbox.com/quiet-fidget-toys-for-school/
National Autism Resources: Fidget Guidance
Identifies characteristics of classroom-friendly fidgets.
https://nationalautismresources.com/fidgets-in-the-classroom/

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