



Soft Play Policy

Definitions

The Soft Room - often referred to as a Quiet Room in other education and residential settings is a room that offers a pupil an opportunity to calm during their waking day.

Overview comment

The Soft Room is a multi-purpose room and can be used as a Sensory room as well as a safe environment for young people to self-regulate their emotions.

Sensory equipment is stored securely in a separate room, depending on the sensory needs of the young person, what equipment is available to them.

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

Best Practice for use of the Soft Room at The Beeches Independent Special School

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 the Soft 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 the Soft Room should form part of a pupil's individual behaviour management 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 Soft 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 Soft Room using agreed PROACTSCIPr physical intervention support strategies.

The Soft Room should only be used after behaviour management strategies have failed to calm the young person. A decision to use physical intervention to support the pupil in accessing the Soft Room should be based upon the young person's risk assessment.

The use of physical intervention will be used to prevent:

- 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 Soft 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 visual prompt cards, Makaton, use of visual cues or verbal communication; this will be included in the young person's behaviour management plan.

What should be the Soft Room?

The Soft 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, and an area for young people to lie down if needed. Soft blankets and covers are to be available to young people who like to cover themselves up. The walls have soft padding on them, to further protect young pupils who are very agitated. Staff must be able to see the child always. Outside windows are covered with blinds which offer a variety of lighting levels. Radiators are covered to prevent student access. Music is available to support the individual if needed. Stereos are not stored in the Soft Room but staff have access to one if needed.

Helping pupils to understand how to use the Soft Room

- Introduce the Soft Room in a positive, proactive way that helps the child to understand the benefits that can come from its usage.
- Explain that the Soft Room is also used for sensory activities, at planned times on their timetable.
- Explain to the child that the room can also 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.
- Explain that the Soft Room will be for them when they are in it.
- Staff should avoid entering the Soft Room unless necessary when the young person is self-regulating their emotions, i.e. to keep the child safe, or unless the child has asked the adult to join them in the room.
- The Soft Room should only be used on a 'scheduled' basis for sensory activities.
- The best outcome of using a Soft Room is when a child learns how to 'self-regulate' independently and can calm her/himself down.
- The Soft Room needs to be used with a calm and positive approach 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.
- It is important to explain that sometimes a member of staff will suggest that 'this is a good time to use the Soft Room' or the child themselves may feel that 'this is a good time to use the Soft Room'.
- Staff should then be alerting warning signs that the child may need a break and remind the child that this may be a good time to use the Soft Room.

Procedure for the use of the Soft Room to support a young person with their behaviour management

- When a member of staff notices that a young person is becoming anxious or agitated, the pupil should be given reasonable opportunity to calm using the strategies detailed in the young person's behaviour management plan.
- If the pupil's behaviour continues to cause concern and is reaching a point where they are affecting other young person, and/or they become a danger to themselves, other service users or staff, the young person should be prompted to make 'the right choice' and comply with requests from staff.
- Other staff should be alerted for support as appropriate.
- If the pupil continues not to comply, staff should suggest 'this is a good time to use the Quiet Room'.
- If the pupil continues not to comply and, staff may consider it necessary to escort the child to the Soft Room using physical intervention in line with school policy.
- Once in the Soft 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.
- When the Soft Room has been used under adult direction, the incident must be recorded appropriately on a behaviour report form, and physical intervention form if appropriate.
- While a young person is in the Soft 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 young people be locked in the Soft Room, nor should the door be held closed.
- If a young person tries to leave the Soft 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, physical intervention may be used to support the young person back into the Soft Room.
- This response must be recorded after the event on a physical intervention form. If this becomes a regular requirement it must be included in the young person's behaviour management plan.