

SEND &amp; INCLUSION · ALL GRADES

# Calm Corner

How to set one up well

## Why most calm corners fail

Many schools set up a calm corner once, then watch it sit unused (or used as a 'time-out' punishment, which is worse). The reason is simple: the corner needs to be properly introduced, properly equipped, and properly framed as a tool — not a place children are sent. Done well, a calm corner becomes one of the most useful spaces in your classroom.

## Where it goes

<p><b>Out of the main flow</b></p> <p>Not the centre of the room. Not by the door. Somewhere a child can BE there without everyone watching.</p>	<p><b>Visible, but private-ish</b></p> <p>You should be able to see if the child is OK from your usual position, but other children shouldn't be staring.</p>
<p><b>Not too small</b></p> <p>A child should be able to sit comfortably. If it's tiny they'll feel trapped.</p>	<p><b>Not too big</b></p> <p>Too much space and it feels like exile. A defined nook, ideally with two walls or partitions.</p>

## What to put in it

Item	Why
A soft mat, beanbag or cushion	Comfortable, safe-feeling place to land
A small selection of fidget toys	Tactile regulation
Books — calm picture books, no demands	Distraction without pressure
A 'feelings poster' to point to	Helps the child name what they're feeling



Item	Why
A timer (visible, not loud)	5-minute reset, not unlimited
A 'breathing card'	Walks them through 4-4-8 breathing
Drawing materials	Quiet creative outlet
A soft toy or small weighted blanket	Comfort, regulation

## What NOT to put in it

Item	Why not
Loud or stimulating toys	Defeats the purpose
Screens or tablets	Become reward, not regulation
Anything 'consequences-based'	Calm corner ≠ punishment
Sweets or food	Become a draw, not a tool
Other children	It's a one-person space

## How to introduce it

1. **SHOW THE WHOLE CLASS.** Don't introduce it as 'this is for Sam.' Introduce it as 'this is for everyone, sometimes.' 2. **DEMONSTRATE.** Sit in it yourself. Show the books. Show the timer. Use it briefly during a calm moment so children see it modelled. 3. **SET CLEAR RULES.** 'You can use the calm corner if you need a quiet moment. Up to 5 minutes. Then you come back and join us.' 4. **PRACTISE.** In the first week, prompt children gently: 'Sam, would you like to take 5 minutes in the calm corner?' 5. **TRUST THEM.** After the first week, they should be able to use it without permission.

## Rules that make it work

- ANY child can use it, ANY time. (Not a SEND-only space.)
- Maximum 5-10 minutes (timer helps).
- One person at a time.
- You don't have to explain why. 'I need a moment' is enough.
- You're never SENT there. You CHOOSE to go.
- When you come back, you rejoin without fuss. Nobody comments.
- Adults don't punish use. Don't say 'oh, AGAIN, Sam?' Don't tally how often.

Followed properly, the calm corner gets used appropriately by most children. It is one of the most cost-effective inclusion strategies in the building.

