



DISTRACTED

Reintegreat School Toolkit

Supporting Pupils Who Are Easily Distracted

1. Introduction

Distraction is a common barrier to learning. For some pupils it is occasional and manageable, but for others it is persistent and impacts not only their own progress but also that of their peers.


At Reintegreat, our approach is:

- To understand *why* a child is distracted before intervening.
- To support pupils through **practical strategies, positive reinforcement, and structured routines**.
- To work with families and external agencies where appropriate.

2. Understanding the Causes of Distraction

Recording incidents and identifying triggers is the first step. Common causes include:

- Lack of wellbeing or anxiety.
- Fear or hypervigilance.
- Changes in routine or uncertainty.
- Peer interactions (friendship difficulties, conflict, comparison).
- Hunger or poor nutrition.
- Boredom or lack of challenge.
- Tiredness or poor sleep.
- Poor organisational skills.
- Environmental distractions (noise, clutter, overstimulation).
- Medical or physical issues (sight, hearing, allergies, illness, SEND needs).

 *If a child is unable to focus, they may quickly become confused and disengaged. Identifying and addressing the root cause is essential.*

3. Strategies to Reduce Distraction

A. Preparation & Lesson Delivery

- Be fully prepared with resources – waiting time encourages low-level disruption.
- Use **multi-sensory approaches**: visual, auditory, kinaesthetic.
- Mix up teaching methods – include interactive and movement-based learning.
- Plan for **short, focused activities** with clear transitions.
- Use **brain breaks** (stretching, movement, breathing, games).

B. Emotional Wellbeing

- Check in with key pupils on arrival and after breaks.
- Reassure children if there are difficulties at home; liaise with parents/carers when needed.
- Pre-empt anxiety by providing a clear timetable for the day.
- Let children know in advance if there are visitors or changes.

C. Classroom Management

- Review seating plans – sit easily-distracted pupils near positive role models.
- Provide sight lines to doors for hyper-vigilant children to reduce scanning.
- Ensure an “exit strategy” in new environments (so they can settle before starting tasks).
- Reduce environmental overstimulation – balance engaging displays with calm spaces.
- Move around while teaching to retain focus.

D. Instruction & Organisation

- Chunk tasks into small steps.
- Use post-it reminders or personalised instructions.
- Provide individual equipment sets (e.g. stationery pots) to reduce off-task searching.
- Use timers to help children break tasks into manageable chunks.
- Give clear, positively-framed expectations: *“We sit so we can write beautifully.”*

E. Motivation & Praise

- Praise and reward concentration:
 - “I like the way you are focusing.”
 - Issue challenges with rewards for sustained attention.
- Use proximity praise to model expectations.
- Employ tactical ignoring for low-level off-task behaviour (while redirecting positively).

F. Addressing Practical Needs

- Hunger: provide breakfast, fruit, or structured snack breaks.
- Tiredness: explore causes (late nights, gaming, care responsibilities, health).
- Medical issues: check eyesight, hearing, physical comfort (eczema, hay fever, illness).
- SEND: adapt strategies and ensure individual support plans are followed.

4. Example Activities to Support Concentration

- **Memory games** (pairs, Kim’s game, tray observation).
- **Observation challenges** (spot the difference, missing object).

- **Physical activities** (quick exercise breaks, yoga stretches).
- **Treasure hunts** linked to curriculum topics.
- **Timers & focus challenges** (“Let’s see how much we can do in 3 minutes”).

5. Staff Reminders

- ✓ Record patterns of distraction to identify triggers.
- ✓ Check wellbeing at the start of the day.
- ✓ Use brain breaks to refresh focus.
- ✓ Keep instructions short, simple, and positively phrased.
- ✓ Plan seating and resources to reduce opportunities for distraction.
- ✓ Balance classroom environment – not over-cluttered or noisy.
- ✓ Work with parents/carers if home issues are affecting focus.
- ✓ Consider underlying medical/SEND needs.

6. Useful Guidance & Resources

- **DfE: Behaviour in Schools** – establishing routines and expectations.
- **SEND Code of Practice** – adapting provision to meet individual needs.
- **Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)**: Guidance on metacognition and self-regulation.
- **Young Minds** – strategies for supporting anxious or hyper-vigilant pupils.