Willow Grove Primary School

Not every movement break meets the same need!



Here's what to try and when to try it

We often recommend ‘a movement break’ as though every type of movement does the same thing.

But a fast, energetic activity may be useful at one moment and completely unhelpful at another.

Start with the purpose, not the activity!

Willow Grove Primary School

When energy appears low

You might notice....

- Slumping or putting their head down
- Slow task initiation
- Reduced attention
- Appearing Switched off

Try brief, more active movement....

- March on the spot
- Cross-body movements
- A quick action sequence to copy
- Delivering or collecting something
- Standing to answer or rehearse

Aim: to help the pupil become more alert and ready to engage.

Willow Grove Primary School

When a Pupil appears restless

You might notice....

- Constantly leaving their seat
- Rocking, tapping or pushing
- Seeking bigger movement
- Finding sustained sitting difficult

Try purposeful whole-body movement....

- Wall pushes
- Carrying a small stack of books
- Palm presses
- Slow, controlled squats
- Moving equipment or completing a classroom job.

Aim: to provide movement before restlessness becomes overwhelming.

Willow Grove Primary School

When a pupil appears tense or overloaded

You might notice....

- A ridged or tense posture
- Movement becoming frantic
- Irritability or withdrawal
- Difficulty processing further instruction

Try slower, predictable movement....

- A quiet, paced walk
- Slow stretches
- Repetitive, familiar movements
- A simple stretch-pause-repeat sequence
- Walking alongside a trusted adult

Aim: to reduce additional demands and support regulation

Willow Grove Primary School

When a pupil is mentally stuck

You might notice....

- Starring at the page
- Repeatedly saying ‘I dont know’
- Losing momentum
- Avoiding the next step

Try movement that reconnects to the learning....

- Walk and talk through the first step
- Stand to rehearse an answer
- Move to match or sequence information
- Collect the equipment needed
- Practise key facts with a simple movement pattern

Aim: to create a brief reset without disconnecting the pupil from the task

Willow Grove Primary School

During transitions

Some pupils benefit from a short, predictable movement routine between activities.

For example:

Stand → Stretch → Collect → Return

Or

Push → Walk → Sit → Begin

Keep it....

- Brief
- Familiar
- Easy to repeat
- Connected to what happens next

Willow Grove Primary School

When movement needs to be discreet

Not every pupil wants to leave the room or be noticed.

Try....

- Pressing both feet firmly into the floor
- Pushing palms together
- Ankle circles beneath the desk
- Standing while working
- Quietly stretching hands and shoulders
- Changing working position

Discreet adjustments can also be available to the whole class.

Willow Grove Primary School

The most important part

Don’t assume the movement helped simply because the pupil completed it.

Notice....

- What were they like beforehand?
- What changed afterwards?
- Could they return successfully?
- Were they more available for learning?
- What did the pupil say?
- Is the same pattern emerging overtime?

Observe, Listen and Adjust!!