

NAIT Safe Space guidance for schools and nurseries

What is a Safe Space?

A Safe Space is an area of the learning environment where a child can go when they feel overwhelmed or need time and space to regulate behaviour. Safe Spaces should be:

- Readily accessible to the child so that they can go safely and independently when they need to
- Available whenever they are needed by the child, for as long as they are needed
- Specific to one child, with their name on it and not a shared space. In some classes you may need several individual safe spaces.

What does a safe space look like?

This is different things in different settings. It can be:

- A pop up tent, if a child likes to feel enclosed
- A cloth over a table, with the child's name on it
- A corner of the room with cushions
- An area outside the classroom with clear physical boundaries
- A chalk circle in a corner of the gym hall with a cushion
- A space containing things you know will help the child to calm down – you might involve the child in planning this
- A high backed chair in a quiet area of the school



How do I decide what is the best safe space?

Consider the child's views

They may be able to tell you what they prefer but they may not. They may already seek out certain spaces where they feel safe and you can tell from this what they like.

Consider accessibility

If the preferred space is too far away, or somewhere the child cannot go independently you may need to find a closer space. Sometimes a sensory room is an enjoyable space but the child cannot go whenever they need because it is used by others or is too far away.

Consider safety

If the child hides in a toilet, this may not be the safest place and we might think – they like a quiet, private, contained space and think about how else we could meet this need?

Consider different environments where a Safe Space is needed

In the classroom, in the gym hall, in the playground.

Consider consistency

The child may not need the Safe Space for long period of time but it needs to be there for the day they do need it.

How and when should the child go to the Safe Space?

- As often as they need
- Teach them how to use it and the rules around it when they are calm
- Provide a symbol so they can request/ inform you without having to speak
- Don't use the Safe Space as a reward – they don't have to earn it, rather we should be pleased they are self-monitoring and finding a way to manage their feelings. There may be other preferred environments that you can use as a reward or movement break
- For as long as they need – taking a child out before they are ready can be counter-productive
- You might tell the child to go to the Safe Space if you recognise the need. Often the adult can give the child the symbol and say "I think you need time in the tent", perhaps with a sand timer to help them understand it's not forever. However be aware that the child might need longer than initial time set.