

De-escalation with social distancing in mind



Prevention

★ **Curriculum:** Extra circle time and PHSE sessions will help support the individual and their class. It will promote whole group empathy for the child with the difficulty.

★ **Consistency:** Ensure all adults are on the same page by documenting and sharing possible triggers. There may be an increased number of adults working with the child in comparison to usual. Keep a record of incidents.

★ **Check signs:** Look out for signs that a child may be becoming unsettled and direct them to a safe space where they can take some time to return to a calm state.



💡 **Firstly...** Ensure the child's usual resources, brain break activities and safe space are available as far as possible.

Draw chalk markings on the playground or use electrical tape around school. Movement can help de-stress individuals. They could help design their own trail. Sometimes, fresh air and a run around does wonders. Even if it's raining!

Go on a trail

Calm voice and stance

Maintain a serene demeanor. How you say something is more important than what you are saying. Keep sentences simple and brief. Body language is equally important; maintain a non-threatening stance.

Distraction

If you can't use your usual techniques as effectively due to social distancing constraints, then if you can, distract them with something. This will hopefully aid calming down. Find out your pupil's favourite thing or topic and have resources ready.

Wait until calm

If a child is in an agitated state, wait until they have calmed down before talking over any issues. You won't be able to discuss any contributing factors until the child is calm.

Words and phrases

Use words and phrases that de-escalate and give the child time to take the opportunity to follow your instruction. For example: Let's try... It seems like... Maybe we can... I wonder if...

Action plan

Develop an action plan with the child and complete the plan before returning to the group. A now and next board may be useful for this.

Use humour

This is dependent on the individual child but can work well and fast in de-escalation. Is there an inanimate object such as a lunch box that has suddenly developed a name and personality? The possibilities are endless!

📞 **Finally...** Involve parents – It is good practice to have regular communication with parents with a home school communication book to note down positives about the day, share good work and share hiccups. This will help home and school work together. Regular phone calls are also helpful.

👥 Get more support - Do you have a person who is on call to support with de-escalation? It might be you! Either way, a second person is best to both support and maintain outward calm. You also both have witnesses that your school's social distancing procedures are maintained. It's also less lonely than trying to support a child in need on your own!



Remove other children

It is always preferable to remove the rest of the class rather than the child and although logistically challenging, it is easier to maintain social distancing this way. You may need to prepare another area in advance for the class to go.

Supporting children who display heightened anxiety is tiring, so make sure you have the opportunity to talk over strategies or particular incidents with someone if needed.

Find more detail on these points at www.positiveyoungmind.com