



TTS Vibrating Weighted Cat Lap Buddy - SD10366

In this review, St Edwards Primary School, Darwen, share with us the ways they have used the Vibrating Weighted Cat Lap Buddy for regulation and in their learning.



Areas we wanted to develop:

As a school, we are increasingly aware of the mental health needs of our children and the ways in which experiences such as trauma can affect their ability to regulate and have utilise a number of resources to support them. In recent years, we've noticed a clear trend: children are joining Reception with lower levels of concentration and attention than before. We understand this can stem from a range of factors—sometimes simple immaturity, and at other times a more specific underlying need.

To support regulation, we have trialled various tools recommended by specialists, such as wobble cushions. However, like most interventions, these are not a 'one-size-fits-all' solution. We also observed that many younger children seemed to regulate more effectively when given opportunities for touch or gentle pressure. With this in mind, trying out a weighted lap buddy felt like an ideal next step.

Alongside supporting emotional regulation, we have also noticed that fewer families now have pets at home. As a result, when reading stories that feature animals, many children have limited first-hand experience of things such as hearing a cat purr or feeling an animal resting on their lap. Our home role-play area is available all year round, as it provides a familiar environment, and we regularly enhance it with different items. Given the children's limited experience with animals, we felt the cat-themed lap buddy would also be a valuable addition here.

How the resource was used / Activities:

We first introduced the resource with individual children who needed support with regulation and focus. It quickly became very popular, so we added it to the home corner to ensure all children had the chance to explore it.

Aid during carpet time – Once the children had settled into the class and become familiar with routines and expectations, we were able to identify those who needed a little extra support to develop their focus, attention and stillness. We introduced the lap buddy as a helpful tool during carpet time. Children could choose to use it with or without the weighted blanket, many opted for both, benefiting from the increased pressure. They would sit with the cat in their lap, and because the vibration is very quiet, it did not distract the children around them. We have one child who uses it regularly and will go and collect the lap buddy themselves, before heading to the carpet if they feel they need it.



Self-regulation and comfort - From time to time, children can become dysregulated for a range of reasons, and we have others who regularly seek comfort through a hug from an adult. For children who needed this kind of reassurance, we introduced the lap buddy as a comforting and regulating aid. It is always available in the classroom so that children can access it whenever they feel they need that extra sense of security. For those who experienced moments of dysregulation, we modelled how to use the lap buddy as a tool to help them feel more grounded and settled.



Home corner pet - The lap buddy quickly attracted interest from many other children in the class. As mentioned earlier, a significant number of children have limited experience with animals, so once they were familiar with using the lap buddy as a regulation or focus aid, we also introduced it into the home corner. This created lots of opportunities to talk about appropriate animal handling and how to care for pets. The children became so invested in caring for the cat that we even had to purchase a small cat bed for it. In the home corner, they now regularly role-play feeding the cat, taking it to the vet, and looking after it—often re-enacting scenes from stories we have shared. This also provides staff with natural opportunities to introduce and model new vocabulary in a meaningful context.



Impact and outcomes:

We found that the lap buddy was the ideal size for our Reception-aged children. Resting it on their laps provided the right amount of pressure to help them feel more grounded. With their legs still, we noticed that many children began sitting up straighter, which will also support core strength over time. The low-level vibration offers an ideal amount of sensory feedback, helping children feel grounded without becoming distracted by it, we were pleasantly surprised by how quiet it is.

The lap buddy has helped children develop greater proprioceptive awareness, recognising when they are fidgeting and what they can do to calm their bodies. Some children now independently identify when they need extra support to focus and will select the lap buddy before coming to the carpet. They can also turn on the vibration themselves, giving them ownership of their self-regulation.

Having the children more grounded and still has noticeably increased their ability to focus during carpet sessions, leading to improved learning and fewer distractions for others.

In the home corner, the children have really enjoyed having a 'pet' in class. It has opened up new opportunities for role play and allowed staff to introduce and model a wide range of animal-related vocabulary. It has also helped bring to life experiences from stories we have read or from home experiences the children have shared.

Quotes from staff and children:

- This is one of the most successful regulation tools I've seen for a while. It really helps and unlike some others, causes minimal distractions.
- After just a few weeks, he is able to sit up straighter and show a stronger core.
- I am surprised how quiet it is, the low-level vibration is perfect for giving sensory feedback.
- I need the cat today, I am going to turn it on to help me calm down.
- He's purring, he likes it here, we are doing a good job of caring for him.
- I am missing my mummy; I am going to give the cat a hug.

With thanks to the children and staff at St Edwards, Darwen, for sharing their experiences with us.