

Top Tips: Using Physical Activity and Sport to Support Pupils in Internal Alternative Provision

1. Make movement a strategy, not a reward

Don't position physical activity as something pupils earn after good behaviour. Use it deliberately to **enable regulation and engagement**, particularly at key pressure points in the day (e.g. after break, after lunch).

2. Teach self-regulation explicitly

Do not assume pupils know how to regulate themselves. Teach them:

- what different emotional states feel like
- which types of movement help (organising, calming, heavy lifting)
- when to use them

Build this into everyday practice.

3. Create simple, repeatable systems

Use practical tools pupils can understand and use independently:

- activity menus
- personal equipment sets
- designated spaces

If it's not simple, it won't scale.

4. Use a graduated model of support

Structure provision so pupils move from:

- adult-led to supported (peer or scaffolded) to independent

Over time, pupils should become less dependent on adult direction and more able to manage their own regulation independently.

5. Build consistency across the whole school

Approaches are most effective when they are:

- used from Early Years to Key Stage 2/4
- reinforced by all staff

- understood by pupils and (where possible) parents

Fragmented approaches don't stick.

6. Use clear, shared language

Give pupils the vocabulary to understand what they are doing and why:

- “ready to learn” / “ready to go”
- “green zone”
- movement language (push, pull, lift, roll)

Language builds **self-awareness and self-efficacy**.

7. Prioritise key transition points

Many pupils struggle most:

- after break
- after lunch
- during unstructured time

Build in short, structured movement sessions at these points to prevent escalation.

8. Trust pupils with responsibility (with structure)

Where appropriate, give pupils real responsibility:

- planning activities
- managing resources
- supporting others

It won't be perfect. That's part of the process. Independence develops through **supported risk**.

9. Use peer mentors strategically

Older pupils can be powerful:

- role models
- co-regulators
- confidence builders

This also benefits the mentors themselves, reinforcing their own regulation and emotional awareness.

10. Secure staff buy-in through impact, not theory

Staff are more likely to adopt these approaches when they see:

- improved engagement
- fewer incidents
- better lesson flow

Make the case through **what works in practice**, not just research.

11. Design the environment to support movement

Don't rely on ad hoc solutions. Think about:

- accessible equipment
- safe breakout spaces
- routes for movement

The environment should make the right behaviour **easy to choose**.

12. Lead it from the top

This only works when leadership:

- models the approach
- backs it consistently
- protects it when under pressure

A clear philosophy (e.g. *"Keep on Moving"*) helps anchor practice.

Bottom line

The most effective approaches:

- **embed movement into daily practice**
- **teach regulation explicitly**
- **build independence over time**
- **are applied consistently across the whole school**

This is not about adding more activity.

It is about using physical activity **deliberately to improve engagement, behaviour and readiness for learning.**