

Stand-Biased Desks



Description: Introduce **stand-biased desks** (“height adjustable” desks) into classrooms. These would allow students the option of sitting or standing for lessons.

Reach

- **If implemented across a whole school** then all students would be exposed to these types of desks and would have the option to stand for lessons.
- It might only be feasible to introduce these to a **small number of classrooms initially**, possibly focussed on particular subjects where it may be more straightforward to implement (e.g., those in which students already stand more, such as science or art). Therefore it could be that students only get exposed to this intervention when they are taking these subjects.

Equality

- Students with disabilities might not be able to utilise the standing option of a stand-biased desk.

Acceptability

- Generally speaking, findings from pilot studies show that **teachers** are supportive of standing/height adjustable desks.
- Early evidence from studies in secondary schools suggests that student perceptions **vary**, with some students wanting to stand and others not. Teacher support varied; unfavourable feedback included potential challenges of group-based work and the large size of the desks.
- Anecdotal evidence from **parents** is that sit/stand desks may improve child behaviour at school.
- Students in several studies report that standing desks **make lessons more enjoyable** and make them feel **more energetic throughout the day** – although some (a minority) reported **back/leg pain** from usage.
- Teachers in our CASE advisory group suggested that standing desks would be good for student-teacher relationships as students would be on ‘equal’ level to teachers. However, some were worried about **behaviour management** (for some students) and think it would “**take some getting used to**”.

Feasibility

- There is evidence of **successful implementation of stand-biased desks in secondary schools**, as well as primary schools and workplaces.
- The variability in adolescent height may complicate the introduction of stand-biased desks.

- Our CASE advisory group suggested that stand-biased desks may be better suited to certain subjects (e.g., students already tend to stand more in art and science so may be more used to it in these subjects).
- It may not be feasible to fit 30 standing desks in a classroom, and a rotation system may be required (i.e., have 10 standing desks and students move around). This might cause more distraction compared to ALL of the class having a standing option.

Effectiveness

- Early evidence of the effects of introducing stand-biased desks in **secondary schools** suggest that they increase **energy expenditure**, as well as **decrease sitting and increase standing** time.
- In **primary school** settings, there is **consistent** evidence that stand-biased desks reduce sitting time and increase energy expenditure.
- There is no consistent evidence that stand-biased desks improve **concentration or learning** outcomes, but there is evidence that they **do NOT adversely affect** academic engagement (when used in primary schools). There is no evidence on these outcomes in secondary schools at present.
- Feedback from primary school teachers indicates that stand-biased desks **improved focus and engagement in lessons**.
- In one study in primary schools, there was no impact of using stand-biased desks on **pain and attention-hyperactivity**.

Cost

- Standing desks vary in price from **£25** for a basic model to over **£600** for a sophisticated one with adjustable heights. A sit-to-stand desk costs approximately **£400**; with bulk purchase this may be reduced to **£300 per desk**.
- Classrooms need to be newly equipped with these desks, as a one-off cost. While this is a sizeable upfront cost, desks are usable for many years, so the annual costs will be much smaller.
- Overall spending will vary depending on classroom size and the number of students, but are likely to be quite considerable. For a class of 30 students, this would be **£9,000 to £12,000** per class.
- On a whole school level this could cost approximately **£270,000** to equip 30 classrooms (i.e., an entire school) with stand-biased desks (based on 30 students per class).