TEN simple strategies to bring about stillness and silence ...
1. **Times for Silence**

Plan for times of silence throughout the day and set up clear guidelines and expectations.

Establish with the class what silence will look like, sound like and feel like. Create a class Y chart and add to this or change it as the practice continues over time. Talk about the fact that there will always be noise but that we can’t change this, and that we have to find silence within ourselves.

Set up for success e.g., *move our chairs back from the table or desk and place our hands either on our tables or on our knees*. Negotiate this with the class and talk to students about the possible benefits of silence and stillness.

Make sure that students know how long the silence will last. Begin with 10 seconds and gradually increase the times for silence.

Give strategies to assist students to enter into the silence e.g. relaxation of the body or simple breathing exercises.

Teach about silence as a positive experience and as something we need to do. This may be as simple as putting heads on desks and closing eyes and resting.
2. Listening Exercise

(The following words are a guide)

Let us still our bodies and remember that God loves us … (30 seconds)

Sit with a straight back but make sure your back is resting against your chair.

Put your feet on the floor and let them feel the floor.

Rest your hands gently in your lap. You may like to rest them on your knees.

Close your eyes gently.

Listen to the sounds outside the room (15 seconds)

Listen to the sounds inside the room (15 seconds)

After I count to 3 slowly open your eyes.
3. Breathing Exercise

(The following words are a guide)

Let us place ourselves in the presence of our loving God....

Sit with your back resting against your chair.

Put your feet on the floor and let them feel the floor.

Rest your hands gently in your lap or you may like to rest them on your knees or on your table/desk ...

Close your eyes.

Listen to the sounds outside the room (15 seconds) ...
Listen to the sounds inside the room (15 seconds) ...
Listen to your breathing ...

Notices the gentle rise and fall of your chest as you breathe in and out (30 seconds)

Listen to the sounds outside the room (15 seconds) ...
Listen to the sounds inside the room (15 seconds) ...
Listen to your breathing ...
After I count to 3 open your eyes gently
4. Closing Eyes

Teach about closing of eyes.

Always remember to invite children to close their eyes... it is difficult for some children to do this.

Set clear expectations if a student chooses to keep their eyes open:

- They must agree to respect the right of others to close their eyes and not disturb them.
- Sit the child so that they are not a distraction to others.
- Give the child a specific place or object/symbol to look at.

Begin slowly and practice closing eyes each day gradually increasing the time.

Choose a time that you know will be achievable and age appropriate to begin with e.g., 10 seconds.
5. Stilling the Body

Engage students in an **Exercise in Stilling** …

*Still your body…*

*Listen to your body… become aware of your body.*

Lead the children to tense parts of the body and then relax them e.g. toes, calf muscles, thighs, stomach, shoulders, neck, face, arms, hands.

*Sit completely still and relaxed and at peace …*

*Let us place ourselves in the presence of God and give thanks for our bodies …*
6. Breathing Exercise

Close your eyes and let your body come to a quietness and stillness.

Listen to your breathing.

Breathe in slowly… Breathe out slowly … (Repeat 3 or 4 times)
Let us take time to think about peace …

On your in breath, breathe in peace …
On your out breath, breathe out peace … (Repeat 3 or 4 times)

Think about a time when you have felt peace.
Breathe in the peace of the trees outside… breathe out peace……
Breathe in the peace of this room … breathe out peace……

Imagine yourself totally surrounded by peace e.g slowly wrap yourself in a blanket of peace.

Count in your mind slowly from 5 to 1 and when you are ready, open your eyes …
7. Breathing Exercise / Visualisation

Let us take some time to be still …
Close your eyes and become aware of your body sitting on the floor/chair …
Feel the ground under your feet and the air touching your nostrils …

Be aware of your nostrils breathing in air.
Listen to the gentle sound of your breathing.

Breathe in slowly …
Breathe out slowly … take a deep breath in and then let it out.

Keep your eyes closed to help you see inside your mind …
Imagine an eagle gliding through the air … (pause)
Imagine the sails of a boat being blown in the wind … (pause)
See the clouds moving quickly across the sky … (pause)
See yourself flying the most colourful kite on a windy day … (pause)

Feel the breeze on your face as you walk on the beach/ up a hill/ in a park … (pause)
Listen to your breathing and slowly open your eyes …
8. Lighting of a Candle

Sit comfortably with your feet on the floor, back straight and hands resting in your lap.

We are going to take some time to be very still and quiet.

As we sit here quietly, watch as <name> lights the candle ...

Look at the flame of the candle as it flickers ...

Watch the flame grow and move ...

Close your eyes gently and look at the darkness ... sit quietly and relax.

Notice your breathing going in and out of your body ... in and out, in and out.

Open your eyes and let us watch as the candle is put out (Use a candle snuffer) ... watch the smoke rise, and go out and around (just like our prayers)
9. Listening to music

An easy way to help students relax and soothe the soul is to listen to music. Music that is calming and reflective can help us escape from the busyness and noise of life. You could use “relaxation music” as well as classical music or music which is reflective of the sounds of nature e.g. birdsong, rainforest, water.

(See ABC Classic Swoon – Classical Music for Sheer Relaxation)

Music that excites, stirs or over stimulates is not the best for this purpose.

As well as listening, students could be given the opportunity to sketch, write words, feelings, emotions and responses during or after listening to the music.

*Students could create their own PowerPoint to accompany a short piece of music.*

*Be clear with the students about what they are to do while the music is playing and how long the music will be playing.*
*Give 30 seconds of silence after the music stops.*
10. Breathing Meditation

Close eyes and listen to your breathing.
Slow down your breathing and count in your mind to 4 on the in breath and then to 4 on the out breath.
Our breath is a gift from God.
Breathe in the peace of God.
Breathe out the peace of God to others.

Websites and Resources
- The World Community of Christian Meditation
  www.wccm.org
- *Coming home: A guide to teaching Christian meditation to children* – Ernie Christie
- *Tune In Chill Out* - Jenny Baker & Moya Ratnayake
- Christian Meditation for Children and Young People | (cominghome.org.au), Catholic Education Diocese of Townsville
- Pray as you go (pray-as-you-go.org)