



Sensory Strategies



Guide



Introduction



This comprehensive resource is designed for school professionals working within Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Special schools as well as parents/carers to support children with sensory needs. It is hoped that this resource will support with facilitating their access to education and overall wellbeing. This guide is intended to be used alongside the Rotherham Sensory Toolkit, identifying a wealth of strategies tailored to meet the unique sensory requirements of each child. By integrating these strategies into the educational environment, the guide aids in the creation of a personalised sensory passport, forming a crucial part of the graduated response for children with identified sensory needs. This ensures a structured, informed approach to fostering an inclusive and supportive learning experience.



How to use this guide

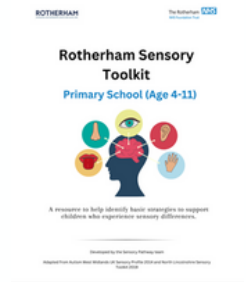
This guide is provided as a resource to Schools, Parents & Carers to support with identifying sensory strategies that may be beneficial to a child presenting with sensory differences. It should be used alongside the Rotherham Sensory Toolkit as a resource package to build a bespoke Sensory Passport for the individual child.

1



To begin with, complete an age-appropriate Sensory Toolkit in collaboration with the child and their parents/carers.

Toolkits can be accessed through the Rotherham Local Offer Website or by emailing: rgl-tr.cypstherapyservices@nhs.net



2



After completing the sensory checklist, you will have identified the child's over or under responsive sensory needs. You may have recorded these on the chart provided:

Using this information, identify the sensory systems which highlight the main concerns impacting on the child. Use the contents page of this document to choose a sensory system to access strategies/recommendations.

	Over responsive (hyper)	Under responsive (hypo)
Visual		
Auditory		
Tactile		
Vestibular		
Smell		
Taste		

3



Within this document you will find strategies for children who are Over Responsive to sensory input are highlighted with a green background and this symbol:  which signals these are generally CALMING strategies to lower sensory arousal.

4



For children who present as Under Responsive (Sensory seeking or low registration to sensory input), you will find strategies with a blue background and this symbol:  which signals these are generally ALERTING strategies, to offer more sensory input that the child needs.

5



Choose the appropriate strategies which are holistic to the child's specific needs, age and developmental level. Use these strategies to complete the bespoke Sensory Passport document, included in the toolkit.

CONTENTS

The strategies and recommendations can be found under the individual sensory systems below.

VISUAL



AUDITORY



VESTIBULAR



PROPRIOCEPTION



SMELL



TACTILE



ORAL



INTEROCEPTION



SEN



HOME



EQUIPMENT

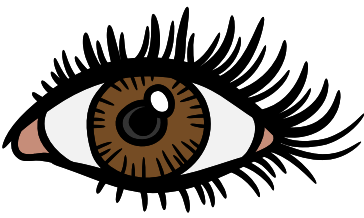


LINKS



Rotherham Local Offer





VISUAL

Recommendations

Visual processing is how the brain makes sense of what the eyes see, and it plays a big part in how children learn and interact with the world. When visual processing works smoothly, children can easily take in information from books, whiteboards, and their surroundings, helping them stay focused and engaged in learning. However, for children with sensory needs, even small changes in the environment can feel overwhelming. Bright lights, busy wall displays, or too many things happening at once can make it harder for them to concentrate, understand what's being taught, and join in classroom activities.

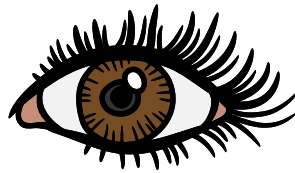
Children who are anxious or hypervigilant often take in much more visual information than others. Their heightened awareness can mean they notice every small detail in their surroundings—whether it's a flickering light, a colourful display, or movement in the background. While this can be helpful in some situations, it can lead to sensory overload, making it difficult for them to filter out what's important and focus on the task at hand.

In a busy classroom, this constant stream of visual information can become overwhelming, causing lots of children to feel distracted, unsettled, and unable to concentrate on learning. Instead of focusing on their work, they might be drawn to things like a poster on the wall or the movement of other children. This can also increase their anxiety, as they struggle to make sense of everything they're seeing. For children in this state, creating a calm, visually organised environment is crucial, helping to reduce the overload and allowing them to engage more fully with their learning.

Calming Strategies Environmental Considerations



- **Store clutter and objects away** in labelled boxes.
- **Use fabric or curtain to cover areas of visual clutter** such as bookcases or 'busy' visual areas.
- **Consider colours of rooms** – calm and uncluttered.
- **Use of window blinds.**
- **Have a low lighting area** to help the child feel more comfortable.
- **Reduce the amount of clutter in the room** e.g. no dangling objects, keep displays on noticeboards, reduced use of pattern, no wavy borders.
- **Clearly display important information and highlight in the same area**, for example, date and objectives in the same place on the board each day.
- **Limit the amount of displays around the whiteboard!**
- **Use of borders** around any wall displays.
- **Sit in the child's seat and look towards the whiteboard/teachers position** – are there any visual distractions such as displays, clutter or areas that may cause distraction during focus time?
- **Plan walk ways so they don't visually interrupt students.**
- In addition to colour, wood-look materials and other finishes representative of nature, commonly referred to as biophilia, can be carried throughout the space to provide warmth and familiarity.
- **Translucent window films** at lower window heights allow sunlight into the room while obstructing outside visual distractions.
- **Have privacy shields available** - for children with visual sensitivities to use when independently learning.



Calming Strategies Over-Responsive Learners

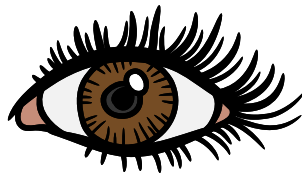


- **Use of sunglasses indoors** / outdoors, especially in strong sunlight.
- **Children & Young people sometimes wear their hood up** as a way to minimise visual input, could this be permitted?
- **Where possible reduce visual distractions**, for example: Use of a privacy screen or position near or facing a wall in the classroom to reduce visual distractions at focussed times.
- **Seat near the front of the classroom**, and avoid facing the window or doorway, that may be busy areas.
- **Use of reading ruler** / encourage to use a finger to track words and reduce distraction of other text on the page.
- **Provide print outs for homework or class objectives where possible**, using neutral colours for text and worksheets. Black text on white worksheets often provide too much glare.
- **Bright fluorescent lights are often too harsh**. Consider placing the pupil near natural light (window) and not directly under the lighting.
- **Warn the child of any changes to the environment eg; moving seats, furniture.**
- **Use matt laminating pouches to reduce glare/reflection** from light.
- **Allow young person to use an early pass** so they can navigate busy/visually overwhelming corridors while it is less busy during transition times.

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Visual noise makes it difficult for students to process information through other senses because the visual stimuli is requiring such a high level of focus and energy from the brain (Milo-Shussman, 2017)

- **Designated Quiet Spaces:** Create designated areas with minimal visual stimuli where children can retreat to when feeling overwhelmed.
- **Visual Timetables:** Use clear and simple visual timetables to help children understand the routine and reduce anxiety about transitions.
- **Limit Visual Stimuli During Tasks:** When focusing on specific tasks or activities, remove unnecessary visual items from the immediate area to help maintain concentration.
- **Use of Visual Boundaries:** Clearly define different areas of the room with visual boundaries using rugs or low dividers to create distinct and manageable spaces.
- **Personalised Visual Tools:** Provide children with individual visual tools, such as plain, non-distracting fidget toys or visual timers, to help them self-regulate.
- **Reduce amount of visual information** / material presented at one time.
- **Be aware of external visual distractions** i.e. trees, roads, etc. fit a blind to the window to reduce distractions.
- **Use bright visuals to highlight important items eg;** Brightly coloured material hanging on their peg. Parent & carers could think about brighter items such as brightly coloured bag, coat, pencil case or water bottle so that these are easier to 'pick out' in a visually busy environment.



Alerting Strategies Under-Responsive Children



- **Use of bold** contrasting colours
- **Use highlighters** to outline important information
- **Seat close to a window**
- **May benefit from use of a tablet, laptop**
- **Complete visually challenging tasks** such as, mazes, word searches
- **Clearly display important information and highlight in the same area on the board**, for example, date and objectives in the same place each day.
- **Provide homework and worksheets on bright paper** or using bright text, where possible.
- **Organise and label all materials** to identify where they belong
- **Use visual reminders to aid organisation skills** e.g. A keychain with laminated pictures of what they need to remember to pack in their school bag.
- **Have a list with pictures for homework**; letters to give parents; required reading etc.
- **Use bright visuals to highlight items** eg; Brightly coloured material hanging on their peg. Parent & carers could think about brighter items such as brightly coloured bag, coat, pencil case or water bottle so that these are easier to 'pick out' in a visually busy environment.
- **High-Contrast Materials**: Provide high-contrast materials and toys to make objects more visually appealing and easier to distinguish.
- **Dynamic Lighting**: Use varied lighting options such as string lights, light-up toys, or colourful lamps to add visual interest and engagement.
- **Visual Tracking Activities**: Encourage activities that require visual tracking, such as watching bubbles, moving toys, or following light patterns.
- **Interactive Screens**: Utilise interactive screens or projectors for engaging visual content, ensuring the material is appropriate and educational.
- **Visual Schedules and Cues**: Use bright, colourful visual schedules and cues to guide activities and transitions, making them more noticeable and engaging.
- **Textured Visual Aids**: Incorporate textured visual aids like raised-line drawings, textured books, or sensory walls to combine visual and tactile input.
- **Frequent Visual Stimuli Changes**: Regularly change visual stimuli in the environment, such as rotating wall displays or introducing new visually stimulating toys, to keep the visual environment dynamic and interesting.
- **Movement-Based Visual Activities**: Integrate movement with visual input, such as using visually stimulating obstacle courses, where children can look at different visuals while moving through the course.



AUDITORY

Recommendations

The way children process sound plays a big role in how they learn and engage in the classroom. Everyday sounds like talking, background noise, and music can have a big impact on their ability to focus and participate. Some children are very sensitive to noise, finding typical classroom sounds overwhelming, which makes it hard for them to concentrate, follow instructions, or join discussions. Others may be hypervigilant, constantly on edge for unexpected sounds, which can trigger a stress response. This keeps them in a heightened state of alertness, affecting their ability to stay calm and focused, and impacting their ability to learn.

Conversely, some children may not pick up on important sounds as easily, leading to difficulties with attention, understanding, and communication. Both heightened sensitivity and under-responsiveness to sound can make learning more challenging. By understanding how children react to noise and adjusting their environment, we can better support them, helping create a space where they feel regulated, comfortable, and ready to learn.

Calming Strategies Environmental Considerations



- **Quiet Zones:** Designate quiet areas in the classroom for breaks from noise.
- **Noise Reduction Materials:** Use rugs, curtains, or acoustic panels to dampen sound.
- **Strategic Seating Arrangements:** Place students away from noisy areas like doors or windows.
- **Noise-Cancelling Headphones or Ear loops:** Provide these for auditory buffering during noisy periods.
- **Structured Routine:** Implement a predictable daily routine to reduce anxiety related to unexpected noises.
- **Visual and Written Instructions:** Use these alongside verbal instructions to ensure clarity.
- **Classroom Sound Awareness:** Identify and reduce unnecessary noises within the classroom. E.g; humming electrics, clocks ticking. Turn off distracting sources when concentration is needed.
- **Flexible Seating Options:** Offer alternative seating to allow students to choose quieter workspaces.
- **Assistive Technology:** Use technology to amplify the teacher's voice clearly without needing loud verbal communication.
- **Communication Boards:** Provide these for students struggling with verbal communication.
- **Regular Check-Ins:** Check in with students to understand their needs and adjust strategies as necessary.
- **Extra Time for Instructions:** Allow the child more time between instructions and more time between repeating the instruction to avoid auditory overload.
- **Engage in Heavy Work Activities:** Movement activities (that involve heavy muscle work, such as, moving with or against gravity) prior to the child going into noisy environments may be useful to lower arousal/anxieties as these types of activities can be very calming.
- **Trial the use of white noise/ brown noise:** during quiet learning times having a low level white/brown noise in the background may drown out distracting noises and act as a 'blanket' to noises for whole-class concentration.



Calming Strategies

Calming Strategies Over-Responsive Learners



- **Use of Low Voice:** Speak in a calm, low voice to reduce auditory stress.
- **Use Familiar and Calming Songs:** Integrate familiar, calming music to soothe and provide comfort.
- **Respect Sensitivities:** Understand that auditory sensitivities can be painful and provide reassurance.
- **Give Noise Warnings:** Provide a 5-minute warning before potential noises, such as fire drills or school bells.
- **Ear Defenders/Headphones/Ear Plugs:** Use these during busy transition times, but avoid prolonged use (30 mins max per use)
- **Quiet Workspaces:** Provide a quiet area for focused work or when students feel overwhelmed.
- **Quiet Lunchtime Spaces:** Offer a quieter space or time for students to eat lunch away from noisy dining rooms.
- **Gradual Noise Exposure:** Allow students to enter assemblies or lunch early to acclimate to noise gradually.
- **Strategic Seating:** Seat students at the end of rows to minimise noise and provide an easy exit if needed.
- **Early Classroom Departure:** Let students leave a few minutes early to avoid busy transition times.
- **Visual Cues for Instructions:** Use visual supports to minimise verbal instructions.
- **Regular Movement Breaks:** Incorporate movement breaks, such as using a balance board or a therapy ball to sit and bounce on or lie on stomach and roll forwards and backwards to add vestibular sensory input into the school day (has a large influence on the auditory sense).
- **Heavy Muscle Work:** Include frequent heavy muscle work activities to calm and improve listening skills.
- **Visual Supports/Photos:** Use visuals to limit talking and support instructions, especially when the student is anxious.
- **Promote Sensory Regulation:** Support sensory regulation with breaks and activities throughout the day.

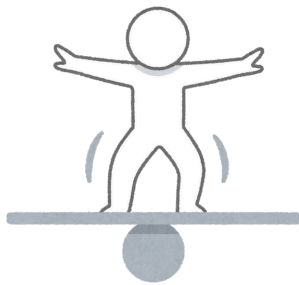
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Children with auditory processing difficulties, which is common in neurodivergent children, benefit from visual schedules and cues. They engage in on-task behaviour for longer durations of time, complete work with more accuracy, and reduce their engagement in maladaptive behaviours (Mesibov & Shea, 2009)

- **Review the Environment:** Consider the noise made by the TV, radio, interactive whiteboard, people, outside traffic, heaters.
- **Block Sounds:** Use ear defenders, a hood, or a musical toy that provides consistent noise.
- **Avoid Background Music:** Ensure no music is playing in the background to minimise distractions.
- **Zone the Classroom:** Create loud and quiet areas within the classroom or outdoor spaces.
- **Allow Self-Soothing:** Permit activities like humming or singing to help children self-soothe.
- **Provide Access to a Quiet Area:** Designate a quiet space where children can retreat when overwhelmed.
- **Visual Prompts:** Use visual prompts to warn before entering a noisy place and provide supportive strategies like ear defenders.
- **Preferred Sounds/Music CDs:** Provide access to preferred sounds or music CDs for comfort.
- **Loud Noise Warnings:** Warn children if a loud noise is likely, such as a fire alarm, and have strategies to reduce distress, like being near an exit.
- **Soft Toys and Comfort Objects:** Provide soft toys or comfort objects from home that make soothing sounds.
- **Routine Sounds:** Use routine, predictable sounds to avoid startling the child.

**Alerting Strategies****Alerting Strategies
Under-Responsive Learners**

- **Use Name with Light Touch:** Use the child's name alongside a light (but firm) touch before talking to them to get their attention.
- **Noisy Toys/Games/Music:** Provide noisy toys, games, or stimulating music at key times during the day.
- **Stimulating Music or Preferred Sounds:** Play stimulating or preferred sounds to engage the child.
- **Access to Noise Making Resources:** Provide access to an outdoor music area, instruments, music with headphones, and singing activities.
- **Consistent Background Noises:** Use consistent background noises like calming nature sounds.
- **Whispering Games:** Play whispering games and give opportunities for the child to shout it out.
- **Favoured Crunchy Foods:** Offer favoured crunchy foods at snack time to provide auditory input through chewing.
- **Vibration Toys:** Use vibration toys to provide additional auditory and sensory input.
- **Use Rhythmic Drumming/Clapping:** Incorporate rhythmic noises, especially during transitions.
- **Play Music with Fast Changing Sounds:** Use dynamic music to stimulate auditory responses.
- **Call Student's Name Before Speaking:** Gain attention by calling the student's name before giving instructions.
- **Listening Games:** Play games like "Guess the Sound" to improve auditory awareness.
- **Face Forward in Classroom:** Ensure students face forward or sit directly in front of the teacher during instructions.
- **Short, Simple Instructions:** Provide concise verbal instructions supported by visual cues.
- **Class Silence During Instructions:** Ask the class to be quiet to help the student focus on instructions.
- **Repetition of Instructions:** Have the student repeat instructions to ensure understanding.
- **Give the pupil time to process the instructions** and give a reply / response, acknowledging it may take longer than their peers.
- **Encourage regular "heavy muscle work"** (proprioception) activities built into the school day to improve arousal levels and help "listening skills"



VESTIBULAR

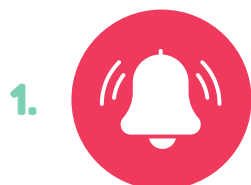
Recommendations

The vestibular system, found in the inner ear, helps children maintain balance, coordination, and a sense of where their body is in space. Think of it as a foundational sensory system, it works closely with other senses, like tactile and proprioception, to help children move and respond to their surroundings. When there are differences with the vestibular system it can impact the way we interpret other sensory sensations.

Movement plays a key role in helping children regulate themselves—simple actions like rocking, spinning, or jumping can be calming and help improve focus for some children. This is because the vestibular system helps the brain process movement, supporting a child's ability to feel grounded and in control. The vestibular system is crucial in helping us to feel safe and secure in our bodies.

When the vestibular system is functioning well, it not only aids in balance but also helps children stay calm and focused, making it easier for them to sit, concentrate, and process information. This regulation through movement is crucial for managing behaviour, improving attention, and creating an overall readiness to learn, which is vital for both academic success and positive social interactions.

Sensory Circuits



1.

ALERTING

Wake up!
Channel excess energy
Can be repetitive



2.

ORGANISING

Problem solving
Involves more muscle groups and parts of the body working together



3.

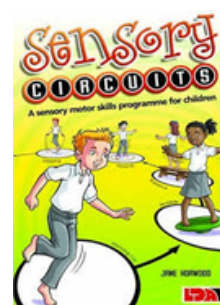
CALMING

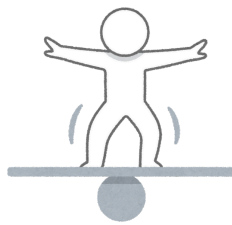
Ending in calming activity to transition back to learning.
Resistance activities, heavy work, deep pressure, breath work.

A sensory circuit is a purposeful, structured, and sensory-based movement routine that helps children to self-regulate and promote a calm and alert state. Sensory circuits typically include a series of activities that involve alerting, organising and calming sensory input. These activities are designed to meet the individual needs of the child and provide them with the sensory input they require to regulate their emotions, behaviour and focus. Sensory circuits are an excellent way to energise a child or settle them, ready to learn and engage with the school day. By incorporating sensory circuits into the daily routine, parents and teachers can support children with their sensory regulation, behaviour and concentration at school and home

For more information:

Sensory Circuits by Jane Horwood





Calming Strategies

Calming Strategies Over-Responsive Learners

It is essential that the young person is in control of the amount of challenging movement experiences they will engage in to feel safe, calm and secure

- **Allow Early Departure:** Allow the pupil to leave class earlier at busy times of the day, such as transition times and lunch, to avoid crowded and chaotic environments.
- **Use of Handrails:** Provide handrails for pupils to use when negotiating stairs, ensuring they can go first or last in line to minimise exposure to jostling or sudden movements.
- **PE Adaptations:** Adapt physical education activities to reduce vestibular challenges. Avoid activities where feet are off the floor or involve rolling, such as gymnastics or certain ball games.
- **Stable Seating:** Use a stable chair that does not tip or move to maintain a feeling of safety and support. Ensure feet are fully supported, flat on the floor, or on a stable footboard.
- **Front or Middle Seat in Cars:** When traveling, ensure the individual can see out of the front window (sitting in the front or middle seat of a car) to reduce motion sickness and provide visual stability.
- **Object Placement:** Keep objects, where possible, at or above waist height to prevent unnecessary bending. For example, use higher school drawers and place books on elevated shelves.
- **Use of a Large Gym Ball:** Allow the use of a large gym ball for sitting and gently bouncing (ensure both feet are flat on the floor). It can also be used for prone lying (on the stomach), gently rolling forwards and backwards.
- **Mini Trampoline:** Provide a mini trampoline for controlled, gentle bouncing to help regulate vestibular input in a safe manner.
- **Dressing supports:** Allow student to have extra support/stability when getting changed for PE. Eg; Allow to sit on chair, allow student to put foot on chair or stable support for tying shoe laces.

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The vestibular receptors have a very powerful effect on arousal by helping to modulate our nervous systems by calming those who are hyped up or revving up those who are sluggish

- **Use low balancing equipment,** chalk marks on the floor, and mats as stepping stones to create a safe and predictable environment for exploration.
- **Ensure the child feels safer** by allowing them to sit in a corner or against a wall where they can feel secure and grounded.
- **Allow additional time and space** for the child to explore movement at their own pace without pressure or sudden changes.
- **Gradually introduce games and songs to build tolerance to movement,** rocking, and changing direction. Start with gentle, predictable movements and increase complexity as the child becomes more comfortable.
- **Activities that encourage crossing midline,** such as placing motivating toys to one side, mark making on large paper, clapping games, and using ribbon sticks, can help integrate vestibular input.
- **Allow the child to be in control of their movements** and let them go at their own pace. Avoid rushing or forcing activities that may cause discomfort or distress.
- **Move the child slowly into different positions,** such as sitting to lying down for nappy changes, to prevent overwhelming their vestibular system.
- **Always provide support for safety.** Ensure the child feels secure during all activities by maintaining close supervision and physical support when needed.
- **Allow the child to sit in the middle seat when in the back of the car** so they can focus their vision forward, reducing potential motion discomfort.
- **Ensure feet are supported to offer more stability** and make the child feel safer, such as using footrests or having their feet flat on the floor.



Alerting Strategies Under-Responsive Learners



- **Mobile Seating Options:** Use a mobile seat to allow some in-seat movement, such as a move n sit cushion or a Zuma rocking chair. These options enable the child to incorporate gentle movement while seated, which can help increase alertness and focus.
- **Defined Seating Spots:** Provide a defined spot for the individual during carpet time or assembly, such as a carpet square or sequencing spot. This helps them understand boundaries and provides a consistent place for them to return to.
- **Active Work Opportunities:** Integrate as many opportunities as possible for active work during the day. For instance, have them solve math problems on the board or involve them in hands-on activities that require movement.
- **Movement Breaks:** Allow regular movement breaks, enabling the pupil to stand, alter positions, or move around the classroom. They may need prompting to do so by providing them with tasks like collecting books, putting items in the bin, or sharpening pencils.
- **Mini Trampoline:** Provide access to a mini trampoline for quick, energizing movement breaks. This can help the student regulate their sensory input and maintain focus.
- **Therapy Ball:** Use a therapy ball for sitting and bouncing or for lying on the stomach to roll forwards and backwards. This provides necessary vestibular input and can be calming yet stimulating.
- **School Apparatus:** Utilise school apparatus, such as climbing frames, tunnels, balance beams, and jumping platforms. These activities help the child engage in vestibular-rich activities that stimulate their sensory system.
- **Promote Physical Activities:** Encourage participation in any physical activities both in and out of school, such as sports, dance, martial arts, or swimming. These activities provide ample vestibular input and can improve overall sensory processing.

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“ Learning firstly requires good attention and focus. The vestibular system helps with alertness and therefore a student's ability to attend. Without good attention, it is very difficult to stay on task or to listen to your teacher. If you can't stay focused at work it will take a lot longer to get your work completed.” www.griffnot.com/vestibular-system/

- **Provide climbing equipment, obstacle courses, and swings** to promote active exploration and movement.
- Incorporate interactive play such as action rhymes to engage the child in dynamic activities.
- **Allow time for spinning** on a roundabout, swing, office chair, supported head inversions (going upside down) or rocking toy to satisfy their need for vestibular input.
- **Ensure that movement breaks are available** alongside settled and calm activities to balance stimulation and rest.
- **Slow down the singing of rocking and spinning songs** to help the child develop control over their movements.
- **Establish movement to music activities** to develop more controlled motor skills.
- **Allow the child to sit on a wobble cushion** or peanut roll to provide continuous vestibular input while seated.
- **Engage in activities that encourage the child to cross their arms or legs over to the opposite side of the body**, such as placing motivating toys to one side, mark making on large paper, clapping games, and using ribbon sticks.
- **Encourage the child to pull or be pulled along on wheeled toys** to provide both proprioceptive and vestibular input.
- **Incorporate tug of war and row row boat activities** to involve the child in cooperative and dynamic movement experiences.
- **Provide frequent opportunities for active play throughout the day.** Incorporate movement into daily routines, such as dancing during clean-up or using a balance board while watching a video.
- **Utilise therapeutic swings**, such as a platform swing or a hammock swing, which allow for controlled and safe swinging activities. This can be both stimulating and calming, depending on the child's needs.
- **Schedule structured movement sessions/ sensory circuits throughout the day** where the child can engage in guided activities that promote vestibular input, such as obstacle courses or dance routines.



PROPRIOCEPTION

Recommendations

The proprioceptive system helps children understand where their body is and how it moves in space. Unlike other senses that process information from the outside world, proprioception gathers signals from muscles and joints to judge force, movement, and position. This system plays a key role in both calming and alerting children, depending on their needs.

For children who are under-responsive, proprioceptive input—like pushing, pulling, or heavy lifting—can provide the sensory feedback needed to become more aware of their body's position and movements. On the other hand, for children who are over-responsive and easily overwhelmed by sensory input, proprioceptive activities can have a calming and organising effect, helping to reduce sensory overload and bring a sense of balance.

Heavy Work..works!



Incorporating heavy work activities throughout the day can support a student's overall regulation, some ideas are (but be creative and use the child's natural interests/motivators):

- Activities that offer the opportunity to push, pull, lift, blow, chew and suck.
- Carrying heavy objects helps the muscle tone and can be a calming activity. Carrying helps to provide proprioceptive input by providing a resistance. Eg; carrying a box of PE supplies, books, paper.
- Use of weighted backpack (no more than 10% of body weight) when walking, during busy transition times, weighted lap pad, shoulder wrap when sitting.
- Encourage weight bearing activities such as chair push ups, wall presses, wall sits, squats
- Incorporate proprioception into PE lessons, for example, tug of war games, wheelbarrow races
- Use of monkey bars provides a stretch to the muscles and helps to develop upper body strength. Hanging from bars can be very calming.
- Climbing is an excellent activity to develop proprioception as child will take their own body weight. Pulling on ropes, climbing nets and monkey bars are also excellent activities.
- Yoga activities
- Meditation / breathing activities
- Resistance band activities - slow and controlled
- Using a weighted slam ball
- Wall sits (invisible chair) & wall pushing / push ups
- Planking & holding squat positions
- Scooterboard activities
- Classroom chores such as stacking chairs, sweeping, carrying boxes of books, carrying PE equipment, holding heavy doors open
- Provide a weighted lap pad or weighted soft toy (cushioned animal door stops are quite useful!) during carpet time or times when the child is required to sit and listen.
- Animal Walks around the hall / in the corridors
- Wheelbarrow Walking
- Wearing a weighted vest, compression vest, ankle or wrist weights.

**Recommendations****Regulating Activities**

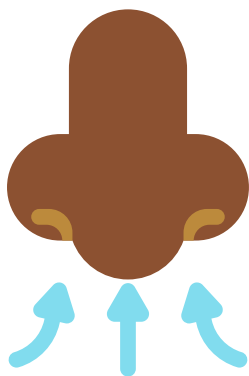
The following activities may provide both **CALMING** and **ALERTING** input, depending on the child's individual needs.

- Allow use of fidget toys to squash, pull, twist
- Use of move n sit cushion to help improve attention to tasks
- Use of resistive band around the front chair legs, to allow pupil to push/pull against using their feet as needed.
- Allow regular movement breaks including “heavy” muscle work into the school day, such as pushing, pulling, lifting objects, walk (deliver message, object)
- Carrying heavy objects helps the muscle tone and can be a calming activity. Carrying helps to provide proprioceptive input by providing a resistance.
- Use of weighted backpack (no more than 10% of body weight) when walking, during busy transition times, weighted lap pad, shoulder wrap when sitting.
- Encourage weight bearing activities such as chair push ups, wall presses
- Incorporate proprioception into PE lessons, for example, tug of war games, wheelbarrow races
- Use of monkey bars provides a stretch to the muscles and helps to develop upper body strength
- Deep pressure can help to calm children by offering weighted items such as lap pads, shoulder wraps. Some children can be encouraged to give themselves “a big hug” either by wrapping their arms round themselves or by using a blanket/ lycra wrap.
- Use of a rocking chair, gym (therapy) ball, space hopper can provide a calming activity as well as an aid to organisation skills.
- Encourage sports activities such as swimming, running, climbing, obstacle courses
- Large beanbag area in the classroom to allow pupil to remove self and crash onto when required.
- Oral motor activities for proprioception relating to the mouth. The jaw has many proprioceptive receptors. Eg; Bubbles, chewy foods, chewlerry, blowing games.
- Spending time in a body sock
- Performing body stretches
- Give bear hugs (if the child consents)
- Encourage the child to blow up a beach ball with deep breaths through the nose, once the ball is inflated can they hug and squeeze the ball really hard to deflate it again?
- Encourage use of water bottle with sports cap for sucking
- Crawling through tunnels or boxes on all fours or commando crawling
- Catching/Throwing heavy weight balls, bean bags, weighted animals, cushions & pillows (try rhythmic movements to aid in calming)
- Pulling apart resistant toys/ objects - lego, snap beads, stretchy toys, pulling staples out of the wall
- Pounding/Rolling playdough or clay
- Vibration - cushions, toys, battery massagers
- Squishing between pillows, mats, gym ball or bean bags

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Proprioceptive input can be a very regulating sense. That is, it can have a calming, as well as alerting, effect. Therefore, proprioceptive activities are often used to help children reach a calm-alert state that allows them to focus and perform better. Studies show that 20 minutes of proprioceptive input can help calm an over-responsive child or alert an under-responsive child, depending on their own unique circumstances. -

<https://www.torontochildrenstherapycentre.ca/what-is-proprioception/>



SMELL

Recommendations

The sense of smell is a powerful and often overlooked aspect of how children experience their environment, significantly impacting their ability to focus and succeed academically. Odour information is relayed directly to the limbic system, the region of the brain associated with memory and emotional processes. This connection is especially important to hold in mind for children with early trauma experiences. For children who are sensitive to smells, certain odours in the classroom can be incredibly distracting, making it difficult for them to concentrate on their work. This heightened awareness of smells can lead to anxiety and reduce their participation in classroom activities.

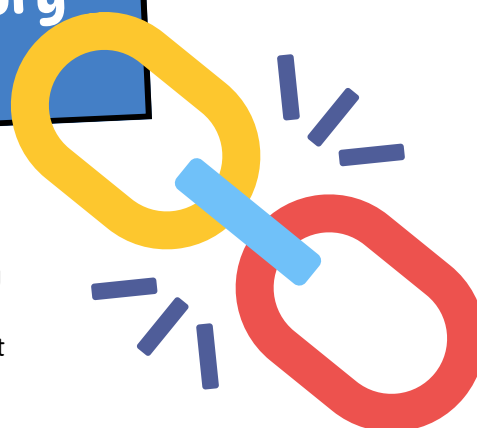
Building positive smell associations & Sensory 'Chaining'

Sensory chaining is a strategy that links sensory experiences to create positive, calming associations. By gradually introducing a particular sense—like smell—it helps children connect that sensory input with feelings of relaxation or comfort. Over time, these sensory cues can be used to help lower arousal levels and support regulation.

For example, using a familiar scent, such as lavender or vanilla, during calm activities can help children associate that smell with feeling relaxed. Once this connection is made, simply introducing the scent can encourage a calming response in moments of stress or overstimulation. Sensory chaining is particularly useful for helping children manage their emotions and find balance by creating positive, sensory-based cues that signal safety and comfort.

By creating a sensory profile in collaboration with the child and their caregivers, positive & calming sensory inputs can be identified and used as part of a sensory chaining strategy in environments or situations which are more overwhelming. Eg; The child associates the smell of caregivers body lotion with safety & comfort. Home then provide a small pot of the lotion for the child to keep as part of their sensory toolbox at school, which the child rubs into their hands during periods of heightened sensory input such as assembly, accessing the lunch hall, transitions to support with calming.

It's never too late to create positive sensory associations! For this strategy to have a bigger impact though the child should be exposed to the 'calming link' regularly and during periods of calm. Remember, sensory chaining can also have the opposite impact where children may have sensory associations linked to feeling unsafe too.



SMELL

Calming Strategies



Calming Strategies Over-Responsive Learners

- **Use Familiar Smells and Tastes:** Use familiar smells especially when the child or young person is in stressful situations or environments. This familiarity can provide comfort and a sense of stability.
- **Allow Choice of Comfortable Smells:** Let the pupil choose smells they are comfortable with. Create a wrist strap, bracelet or even a handkerchief up a sleeve sprayed with their chosen smell. They can sniff this to help override other unpleasant odours.
- **Incorporate Heavy Muscle Work (Proprioception):** Engage the pupil in heavy muscle work activities to help lower anxiety. Activities like pushing, pulling, or carrying heavy objects can provide calming proprioceptive input.
- **Use of Chewy Aids:** Provide chewy aids appropriate for the pupil's age. These can help with self-regulation and provide a distracting sensory input.
- **Thoughtful Classroom Positioning:** Position the pupil away from bins and open windows during lessons to minimise exposure to unpleasant or distracting smells. This helps create a more comfortable and focused learning environment.
- **Use of Essential Oils or Scented Items:** Consider using essential oils or scented items that the child finds calming. These can be placed on a cotton ball in a small container or on a piece of fabric that the child can keep with them.
- **Scent-Free Zones:** Establish scent-free zones in classrooms and other common areas to reduce the impact of overwhelming smells. Inform staff and students about these zones to ensure they are respected.
- **Gradual Exposure to New Smells:** Gradually introduce new smells in a controlled manner. Start with low-intensity exposure and slowly increase it, allowing the pupil to acclimate over time.
- **Personal Scent Kits:** Create personal scent kits with familiar and comforting smells that the pupil can use when needed. This can include items like a small bottle of their favourite lotion or a scented handkerchief.
- **Scented Lip Balm:** Provide scented lip balm that the pupil can apply and smell when they need a calming scent. This portable and easy-to-use option can help them manage unpleasant odours in the environment.
- **Calming Nasal Inhalers:** Older children & teenagers may prefer to use a calming nasal inhaler such as a 'Snift' type inhaler. These can be discreet tools used during periods of heightened anxiety or sensory overwhelming environments. Parents should purchase this and supervise testing the product before taking it into school.
- **Limit Exposure to Unpleasant Smells:** Help the child become aware of strategies to avoid unpleasant smells, such as leaving the area or moving to a different room.
- **Adjust Lunchtime Routine:** Provide foods the child is known to like. Sit near an open window or in a room away from dining room smells to minimise exposure. Offer an alternative eating area away from strong smells.
- **Teach the child calming strategies** to help them manage overwhelming reactions to smells, such as deep breathing exercises.
- **Use Unscented Soaps and Avoid Perfumes:** Opt for unscented soaps and avoid wearing perfumes around the child to reduce exposure to strong scents.
- **Make Positive Links with Smells:** Create positive associations with smells by linking them to enjoyable experiences (e.g., "Mmmmm, this jelly smells sweet").
- **Involve the Child in Food Preparation or Messy Play:** Engage the child in food preparation or messy play with foodstuffs to help them become more familiar with different smells in a fun and non-threatening way.



Alerting Strategies Under-Responsive Children



- **Use Strong, Alerting Smells:** Introduce strong and alerting smells such as mint or citrus. These scents can provide the extra sensory input that under-responsive learners seek, helping them stay engaged and focused.
- **Use of Stronger Smelling Soap:** Provide stronger smelling soap for handwashing. Scents like lavender, eucalyptus, or peppermint can offer the stimulating olfactory input these children need.
- **Smell Pens and Stickers:** Use scented pens, markers, and stickers as tools for sensory stimulation. These items can be incorporated into classroom activities or used during breaks to provide olfactory input.
- **Essential Oils and Scented Items:** Introduce essential oils with strong scents like eucalyptus, peppermint, or rosemary. These can be used in diffusers, on cotton balls, or in personal scent kits.
- **Aromatherapy Playdough:** Provide playdough infused with strong scents. This can serve a dual purpose of tactile and olfactory stimulation, keeping hands busy while providing sensory input.
- **Scented Necklaces or Bracelets:** Offer necklaces or bracelets with scented beads or fabric. These wearable items can provide ongoing olfactory input throughout the day.
- **Scent Jars or Smell Boxes:** Create scent jars or smell boxes with various strong-smelling items. Allow children to explore these during sensory breaks to satisfy their need for strong olfactory input.
- **Incorporate Scent into Learning Activities:** Integrate scents into learning activities, such as using scented stickers for reward systems or adding scents to art projects.
- **Regular Olfactory Breaks:** Schedule regular breaks where the child can engage with strong scents. This can help them stay regulated and attentive during learning periods.
- **Encourage Safe Exploration of Scents:** Teach children about safe and appropriate ways to explore and satisfy their olfactory needs. Provide them with approved scented items and discourage smelling inappropriate objects.
- **Use of Scented Lip Balm:** Provide scented lip balm that the child can apply and smell when they need extra sensory input. Choose strong and appealing scents like berry, mint, or citrus.



- **Engage the child in games that involve guessing different smells,** starting with strong aromas and gradually introducing subtler ones.
- **Allow the child to hold a ball of strong-smelling play dough,** fragrance, or a washable toy during nappy changes if they are preoccupied with seeking strong smells.
- **Provide Favoured & Stronger Smells:** Use preferred scents, such as a favourite shampoo on dolls' hair or a scent on cotton wool in a container with a hole in the top. Have 'scent stations' set up where children can access stronger smelling odours in designated scent jars
- **Encourage Fragrant Mark Making:** Encourage the child to engage in mark-making activities using fragrant pens or crayons to combine sensory experiences with creative play.



TACTILE

Recommendations

The tactile sensory system, which processes touch sensations, is crucial for a child's ability to learn and succeed in school. It helps them understand their surroundings, develop motor skills, and interact with others. A well-regulated tactile system also plays a key role in a child's sense of safety.

Children who are overly sensitive to touch might find certain textures or light touches overwhelming, which can lead to anxiety and avoidance behaviours. This heightened sensitivity can make them feel unsafe or uncomfortable, impacting their ability to focus and participate in certain activities. Conversely, children who are under-responsive to touch might seek out more tactile input, like fidgeting or touching everything around them, which can also affect their engagement and sense of security.

Both extremes can impact on a child's focus, social interactions, and overall school engagement. Therefore, understanding and supporting the tactile system is essential for creating a safe and comfortable learning environment that helps each child thrive.

Calming Strategies Environmental Considerations



- **Modify Arts and Crafts Activities:** Provide alternatives that use tools such as glue sticks, paintbrushes, or tongs instead of hands. This encourages participation and gradually increases tolerance for different textures.
- **Simplify Textures in Activities:** Avoid combining multiple textures in a single activity to prevent overwhelming the student.
- **Strategic Classroom Placement:** Position the student in a part of the classroom where they are less likely to be bumped into or brushed against by others. This might be at the edge of the classroom or away from high-traffic areas.
- **Adjust Transition Times:** Allow the student to leave the classroom earlier or later during busy times such as transitions, lunch, and assemblies. This helps avoid the crowded corridors and cloakrooms.
- **Alternative Seating Options:** Offer the option to sit on a cushion, beanbag, or special seat if the child finds sitting on the carpet uncomfortable. This provides a more tolerable and supportive seating experience.
- **Personal Space Awareness:** Teach the entire class to maintain an arm's length distance from others while standing or walking. This helps respect personal space and minimises unwanted touch.
- **Create a Quiet Zone in the Playground:** Establish a quiet area with a limit on the number of students allowed at one time to reduce the likelihood of accidental bumps. Provide structured play activities like hopscotch or an obstacle course to help students who struggle with unstructured time.
- **Flexible Uniform Policy:** Be open to modifications in the school uniform policy for children who find certain fabrics or clothing items uncomfortable. Allow them to wear alternatives that meet their sensory needs.
- **Provide Sensory Breaks:** Allow regular sensory breaks where the student can retreat to a designated quiet area or sensory room to regulate their tactile input and return to tasks feeling more comfortable.
- **Use Visual Supports:** Implement visual schedules and cues to prepare the student for activities involving tactile input. Knowing what to expect can reduce anxiety related to tactile sensitivities.



Calming Strategies

Calming Strategies Over-Responsive Learners



- **Avoid light touch if needing to touch student** – use firm pressure instead
- **Avoid approaching from behind** as student may be easily startled / distressed, if touched without warning.
- **Use of heavy muscle work** (proprioception) activities prior to busy times of the day, such as, transitions, to help reduce anxieties or the impact of tactile activity or experience (for example, being accidentally bumped into).
- **Standing / walking in a line can be upsetting** in case of accidental touch by others – encourage student to stand/walk at the front / end of the line to minimise this risk.
- **Changing for sports can be an overwhelming** challenge for students. Consider an alternative space to change to prevent peers being too close / accidentally touching, bumping into student which can be hugely distressing for a student.
- **Teach the student how to ask for extra personal space** in an appropriate way rather than hitting or pushing
- **Some tactile sensitive students may benefit from wearing something tight underneath their uniform** like a Lycra sports garment / skins / rash vest or swim suit
- **Explore alternatives e.g. seamless socks**, different fabrics, cutting off labels.
- **Seat child at end of the row** or with back leaning against a wall during assembly so they have an easier exit if feeling overwhelmed.
- **Allow the use of a discreet fidget tool** for the child to manipulate as a calming strategy eg; art eraser, blue tac
- **Modify Tactile Activities:** Consider the tactile element of activities and modify them when possible. For example, when painting or using playdough, allow the use of tools or wearing gloves. Always allow the child to wash their hands if requested.
- **Provide Personal Space:** Allow the child to sit away from others to give them the space they need to feel comfortable.
- **Prior Warning for Touch:** If touch is necessary, always give the child prior warning to prepare them.
- **Build Up Fun Interaction:** Engage in fun, non-touching interactions on a one-on-one basis with the child to build trust and comfort.
- **Adjust Hugging Techniques:** Try a firmer hug rather than a light touch, or vice versa, depending on the child's preference.
- **Use Objects for Contact:** Use objects instead of direct skin-to-skin contact, such as rolling a ball over their hand or body. Some children may prefer being wrapped snugly in a blanket.
- **Personal Care Adaptations:** When carrying out personal care, allow the child to stand if they feel safer that way. Use warm wipes for cleaning and offer a distraction toy.
- **Encourage Messy Play Gradually:** Gradually encourage messy play activities using hands, starting with firm, dry textures and working up to wet or sticky textures.
- **Comfortable Uniform Options:** Allow the child to wear comfortable versions of the school uniform, such as jogging suit bottoms and trainers.
- **Pre-Uniform Massage:** Massage the child's feet before putting on socks and shoes to desensitise and prepare them for wearing clothing.
- **Clothing Modifications:** Remove labels from the child's clothing and allow them to wear socks inside out. Wash new clothes to soften them before wearing.
- **Encourage Barefoot Play:** Encourage barefoot play, gradually introducing contact with different surfaces, such as textured bath mats and carpet tiles.
- **Provide Quiet Areas and Sensory Dens:** Set up quiet areas and sensory dens where the child can retreat to when feeling overwhelmed.
- **Use Alternative Entrances:** Allow the child to use a different entrance than their peers to avoid crowded and overwhelming situations.
- **Implement Sensory Tools and Toys:** Use sensory tools and toys such as weighted blankets, sensory brushes, and textured toys to help the child manage tactile sensitivity.

TACTILE



Alerting Strategies

Alerting Strategies Under-responsive Learners



- **Allow Use of Fidget Tools:** Provide a variety of fidget aids with different textures and firmness, such as stress balls, koosh balls, and Velcro strips. These can help increase tactile awareness and keep the child engaged. Have a fidget class contract if there are concerns regarding misuse.
- **Weighted Lap-Pad with Reversible Sequins:** Use a weighted lap-pad with reversible sequins to provide both tactile and proprioceptive input.
- **Encourage Interaction with Various Materials:** Promote activities that involve working with a wide range of materials and textures. This can help give the tactile input they are seeking.
- **Velcro Under Desk:** Place Velcro strips under the student's desk for them to pick at discreetly, providing a constant source of tactile input.
- **Desk Partitions and Visual Reminders:** Use desk partitions and visual reminders to help the student understand and maintain personal space.
- **Regulation of Force and Pressure:** Encourage the child to experiment with applying light and heavy pressure in various activities. This can help them better regulate the force they use in everyday tasks.
- **Incorporate Proprioception Activities:** Integrate proprioceptive activities into the school day to help regulate the nervous system and increase arousal. Activities such as chair or desk push-ups and carrying heavy items can be beneficial.
- **Use of Tight or Heavy Clothing:** Consider tight or heavy clothing, such as compression garments or weighted vests, to provide additional proprioceptive and tactile input.
- **Mark Physical Boundaries:** Mark out where students should line up for breaks, using floor markings like feet outlines. This helps establish clear physical boundaries and personal space.
- **Teach Personal Boundaries with Social Stories:** Use social stories to teach children about personal boundaries, including the importance of asking for permission before hugging or touching others.
- **Tactile Play Activities:** Incorporate tactile play activities such as sand play, water play, finger painting, or using tactile bins filled with different materials (e.g., rice, beans, or beads). These activities can increase tactile sensitivity and engagement.
- **Provide Chewy or Oral Motor Tools:** Offer chewy tools or other oral motor aids to provide additional tactile input through the mouth. This can be especially calming and organising for some children.
- **Finger Songs and Games:** Engage in finger songs and games to stimulate tactile input.
- **Barefoot Play:** Promote barefoot play, foot massages, and foot spa activities. Introduce a variety of surfaces such as bubble wrap, sand, bumpy bath mats, and trays of smooth pebbles.
- **Temperature Exploration:** Experiment with warm and cold items, such as sealed containers with warm water, hand warmers, and ice-cold drinks.
- **Messy Play:** Include messy play activities with materials like sand, water, finger paint, shaving foam, jelly, slime, and mud.
- **Exploratory Play:** Provide a variety of textures for exploratory play, including lentils, rice, seeds, beans, pasta, cotton wool, and sandpaper.
- **Tactile Toys and Objects:** Offer tactile toys and objects such as pinecones, spiky balls, and vibrating toys.
- **Pressure Experiences:** Provide opportunities for pressure experiences through the use of massage rollers, firm hugs, and being wrapped in a blanket. Consider using a suitably weighted blanket or cushion.
- **Tight Clothing:** Use tight clothing like vests to provide constant tactile input.
- **Hands-On Activities:** Incorporate activities that involve pressure through the hands, such as stiff dough play, baking with dough, magic sand, and painting with hands and feet.
- **Tactile Sensory Bins:** Use tactile sensory bins filled with materials like dry lentils, pasta, rice, and cornflour for play.
- **Tactile Walkways:** Create tactile walkways with different textures for feet, such as carpet tiles and grass.



ORAL

Recommendations

The oral sensory system, which processes sensations through the mouth, is key for eating, drinking, and speaking. Children with sensory needs might face challenges such as taste sensitivities, difficulty distinguishing between different textures, and heightened sensitivity in the mouth area. These issues can greatly affect their daily routines and learning experiences.

Taste sensitivities may cause children to react strongly to certain flavours or textures, leading to picky eating or a craving for intense tastes. Difficulties with oral discrimination can make it hard for them to identify and differentiate between different oral sensations, which can impact their speech clarity and feeding skills. Additionally, tactile sensitivity in the mouth might make certain textures uncomfortable, affecting their willingness to try new foods or participate in activities that involve oral movements.

These challenges can affect a child's nutrition, social interactions during meals, and overall comfort, emphasising the need for tailored sensory strategies to support their oral sensory development and integration.

Oral Discrimination difficulties

Oral discrimination difficulties refer to challenges in perceiving and distinguishing between different stimuli in the mouth, such as textures, temperatures, shapes, and sizes. This can affect a child's ability to properly chew and manipulate food, leading to issues with eating and speech. Children with oral discrimination difficulties might struggle to determine where food is in their mouth, affecting their chewing and swallowing efficiency. You might notice the following:

- Seems to have difficulty chewing various foods
- Difficulty using a straw (*This is also commonly associated with poor oral-motor skills, which refers to coordination and strength of mouth movements)
- Drools and spits frequently
- Frequently spits food out of mouth while eating
- Food seems to accidentally fall out of mouth
- Loses track of food in mouth and as a result will gag/choke on foods (In this case, gagging doesn't happen instantly, but after the food is in mouth. This type of gagging can also be caused by poor oral-motor skills)

Suggested Oral- motor Activities:

Chewing Activities

- Crunchy Foods (raw veggies, pretzels, crisps, nuts, hard granola bars, popcorn, apples, etc.)
- Vibrating Oral toys
- Chewy jewellery
- Chewy pencil toppers, zips
- Chewing gum (kids, younger than you may think, can handle this with proper supervision)
- Chewy foods (dried Chewy foods, fruits, liquorice, fruit snacks, beef jerky, bagels, marshmallows, raisins, etc.)

Sucking/Licking Input

- Sour hard candies / polo's (see how long can suck it for before it breaks)
- Lollies (especially ice lollies)
- Thick drinks through a small straw (smoothie, milkshake, yogurt)
- Long Curly straws offer more resistive sucking
- Drinking from a sports bottle (camelback water bottle, offers great oral sensory input by resistive sucking)
- Ice cubes

Blowing Activities (generally calming/ organising input)

- Blowing up balloons / beach balls / inflatables
- Blowing bubbles ("Bubble Mountain")
- Harmonicas
- Party blowers
- Whistles
- Straw blowing games - blowing ping pong balls, feathers,



ORAL

Calming Strategies

Calming Strategies Over-Responsive Learners



- **Recognise that eating can be seen as a demand:** Minimise the competing sensory demands on the child by keeping lunch time a calm, predictable part of the daily routine without pressures or changes to the routine. Create a calm, positive mealtime environment. Avoid pressuring the child to eat and offer plenty of encouragement and praise for any attempts to try new foods.
- **Gradual Exposure to New Foods:** Introduce new foods slowly and in small amounts. Pair them with familiar, preferred foods to reduce anxiety and increase acceptance.
- **Desensitisation Techniques:** Use desensitisation techniques such as having the child touch, smell, and play with new foods before tasting them. This helps to gradually reduce sensitivity.
- **Serve Foods at Preferred Temperatures:** Pay attention to the child's temperature preferences for food and drinks, offering items that are warm, room temperature, or cold based on their comfort level.
- **Flavour Gradation:** Gradually introduce stronger flavours by mixing them with blander foods. For example, add a small amount of a new seasoning to a familiar dish and slowly increase the amount over time.
- **Routine and Predictability:** Establish a consistent mealtime routine. Predictability can help reduce anxiety around eating and provide a sense of security.
- **Small, Frequent Meals:** Offer smaller, more frequent meals and snacks to avoid overwhelming the child with large portions, which can be daunting for sensitive eaters.
- **Oral Motor Exercises:** Incorporate oral motor exercises to help desensitise the mouth. Activities like blowing bubbles, using a straw, or chewing on resistive foods (e.g., dried fruit or chewy snacks) can help build tolerance.
- **Involve the Child in Food Preparation:** Engage the child in cooking and food preparation. This hands-on involvement can make new foods less intimidating and more interesting.
- **Sensory Chewing Tools:** Provide sensory chewing tools or oral motor toys to help the child regulate their sensory input and reduce oral sensitivity.
- **Offer Choices:** Give the child choices between different foods to empower them and reduce resistance. Offering two or three options can make mealtime feel less restrictive.
- **Consistent Exposure:** Regularly expose the child to new foods without forcing them to eat. Simply having the food on their plate or seeing others eat it can gradually build acceptance.
- **Sensory-Friendly Utensils:** Use sensory-friendly utensils that the child is comfortable with, such as smooth, non-metallic spoons and forks, to make eating more pleasant.
- **Modify Food Textures:** Offer a variety of textures to find what the child is comfortable with. For instance, try blending, pureeing, or mashing foods to create a smoother texture if the child is sensitive to lumps or chunks.
- **Gradual exposure / wake the mouth up:** Massage the face gently around the mouth area; again encourage the child to imitate these using two hands if possible or use a wash cloth/flannel to gently rub the gums and teeth so the mouth feels awake and more prepared for eating/ teeth brushing.
- **Play in a sensory bin!** This is not directly affecting oral input, but it is improving the tactile system as a whole and can have a dramatic effect
- **Heavy work/ Proprioceptive input prior to eating:** Oftentimes when there are sensory needs in the mouth, there are sensory needs outside of the mouth, too. When you meet those needs outside of the mouth (when the body gets the right amount of proprioceptive input), the sensory systems are more regulated to tolerate trickier sensations.
- **Drinking through a sports bottle,** small straw or long bendy straw can offer calming input

For specific advice on teeth brushing then please refer to the 'Home' chapter of this guide



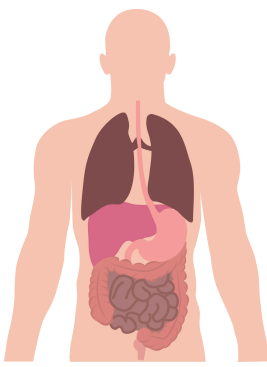
ORAL

Alerting Strategies

Alerting Strategies Under-Responsive Children



- **Provide Chewing Alternatives:** Offer safe and appropriate chewing alternatives such as chewable jewellery, chewy tubes, or silicone-based chew toys to satisfy the need to chew and lick.
- **Introduce Strong Flavours:** Offer foods with strong flavours to stimulate the taste buds, such as sour, spicy, or tangy foods. Examples include citrus fruits, pickles, spicy snacks, and strong-flavoured cheeses. Consider offering highly flavored snacks like lemon slices or marmite toast.
- **Variety of Textures:** Encourage foods with a variety of textures to provide more sensory input. Include crunchy, chewy, and crispy foods like raw vegetables, nuts, dried fruits, and granola bars.
- **Temperature Variation:** Experiment with different food temperatures to increase sensory input. Offer cold foods like ice pops, ice cubes, and chilled fruits, as well as warm foods like soups and hot cereals.
- **Oral Motor Exercises:** Incorporate oral motor activities that provide strong sensory feedback. Activities like blowing bubbles, using a straw, and playing with whistles or harmonicas can help regulate sensory input. Encourage oral motor games prior to eating to help “feel” the food in the mouth.
- **Frequent Sensory Breaks:** Schedule frequent sensory breaks throughout the day to allow the child to engage in chewing and oral sensory activities. This can help them stay focused and calm during structured tasks.
- **Include Proprioceptive Input:** Integrate activities that provide proprioceptive input to help regulate the nervous system, such as pushing, pulling, and carrying heavy objects.
- **Create Sensory Bins:** Use sensory bins filled with edible materials like dry rice, pasta, or cereal to provide safe exploratory play that satisfies oral sensory needs (with supervision)
- **Encourage Taste Exploration:** Regularly introduce new and varied foods to keep the child's sensory system engaged. Allow them to explore and taste different foods without pressure.
- **Cut food into small pieces and encourage the child to eat one piece at a time.**
- **Flavoured Chewing Gum:** Provide flavoured chewing gum or hard mints to suck to offer a continuous source of strong taste and chewy texture.
- **Interactive Eating Activities:** Engage the child in interactive eating activities, such as dipping vegetables in flavourful sauces, making fruit kebabs, or assembling mini sandwiches.
- **Sensory-Friendly Classroom Tools:** Use sensory-friendly classroom tools like textured pencil grips, fidget toys, and oral sensory aids to help the child stay focused and engaged.
- **Oral Hygiene:** Encourage regular oral hygiene practices with flavoured toothpaste and trial an electric toothbrush for extra sensory stimulation.
- **Dip chewy toys in strong flavours** to enhance sensory input and make them more appealing to the child.
- **Vibration Around the Face:** Use vibration around the face with tools like vibrating toothbrushes or massagers to provide additional tactile and sensory input.



INTEROCEPTION

Recommendations

The interoception sensory system helps us sense internal bodily signals like hunger, thirst, pain, temperature, and the need to use the bathroom. It plays a key role in understanding and responding to what's happening inside our bodies. For children, difficulties with interoception can make it hard to recognise and manage these signals. They might struggle to tell when they are hungry, full, too hot, too cold, in pain, tired, or need the toilet. These challenges can also extend to recognising internal emotions, making it difficult for children to identify when they are becoming distressed. This can impact their ability to self-regulate, leading to heightened anxiety and problems with managing their feelings and bodily functions. Supporting the interoception sensory system is crucial for helping children better manage their emotions, physical needs, and overall wellbeing.

Supporting Interoceptive Awareness

Hunger and Fullness

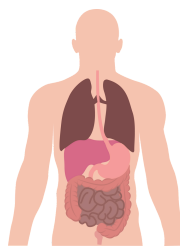
- **Routine Eating Schedules:** Establish regular meal and snack times to help the child recognise hunger and fullness cues over time. Visual timetables with meals / menu planning may help children who are pre-occupied with eating that food is scheduled throughout the day.
- **Mindful Eating Practices:** Encourage the child to eat slowly and pay attention to how their body feels before, during, and after eating. Discuss these feelings with them.
- **Food Journals:** Keep a food journal where the child records what they eat and how they feel afterward. This can help them start to notice patterns and bodily responses to hunger and fullness.
- **Education:** Support children who are not motivated by hunger sensations to understand why it's important that our bodies need fuel/energy to participate in the activities that are motivating to them.

Thirst

- **Scheduled Drinking Times:** Set reminders for the child to drink water regularly throughout the day, even if they don't feel thirsty. This could be via visual timers, smart watches with prompts or verbal reminders.
- **Flavour Enhancements:** Add natural flavours (like lemon or cucumber) to water to make drinking more appealing and help the child recognise the refreshing sensation of being hydrated. Notice and draw attention to the sensation of drinking at different times eg; after P.E, when it's hot.
- **Hydration Charts:** Use visual aids like urine hydration charts to track water intake and help the child to notice when they need to drink more water.
- **Water bottles:** There's a number of different water bottles that can be engaging for young people with prompts to keep drinking.

Temperature Regulation

- **Temperature Checks:** Teach the child to perform regular self-checks to see if they feel too hot or too cold, and to adjust their clothing accordingly.
- **Clothing Choices:** Encourage the child to dress in layers that they can easily add or remove based on how their body feels.
- **Environmental Awareness:** Help the child notice environmental cues (like sweating or shivering) and relate them to their body's needs for cooling down or warming up.
- **Weather Prompts:** Check in with the child to notice what the weather is outside and what clothing may be appropriate. If the child refuses to wear a coat for example, make sure the coat is available and once the child has registered they need the coat then encourage the child to notice how their body is feeling within that moment while providing the coat.
- **Explore different temperatures through play:** Eg; Touching cold items, touching warm items, using bath thermometer to record bath temperature. Encourage the child to notice how their hands feel when touching different temperatures.



Recommendations

Pain and Discomfort

- **Body Scans:** Practice guided body scan exercises where the child lies down and mentally checks in with different parts of their body to notice any discomfort or pain.
- **Visual Pain Scales:** Use visual pain scales (with faces or numbers) to help the child rate and communicate their pain levels.
- **Regular Check-ins:** Schedule regular check-ins throughout the day to ask the child how their body feels and if they notice any pain or discomfort.

Need to Use the Toilet

- **Toilet Schedules:** Establish regular toilet breaks to encourage the child to try using the toilet even if they don't feel an immediate need.
- **Visual Cues:** Place visual reminders or charts near the toilet to prompt the child to think about whether they need to go. Smart watches with reminders may be helpful for older children.
- **Body Cues Education:** Educate the child about the physical sensations that indicate the need to use the bathroom, such as pressure in the bladder or a full feeling in the abdomen.

Fatigue and Rest

- **Sleep Routines:** Establish consistent bedtime and wake-up routines to help the child recognise and respond to feelings of tiredness.
- **Rest Breaks:** Incorporate short rest breaks throughout the day, where the child can engage in quiet activities to tune into their body's need for rest.
- **Energy Level Check-ins:** Regularly ask the child to rate their energy levels on a simple scale (like a traffic light system: green for energetic, yellow for okay, red for tired) to build awareness of their body's need for rest.

Emotional Regulation

- **Emotion and Body Connection:** Teach the child to connect their emotions with bodily sensations (e.g., "When you're nervous, how does your stomach?"). Remember, we are not labelling children's emotions for them or telling them how their bodies must feel as we all experience internal signals differently.
- **Mindfulness Activities:** Incorporate mindfulness activities, such as deep breathing or yoga, to help the child become more aware of how their body feels in different emotional states.
- **Emotion Journals:** Use emotion journals where the child can draw or write about their feelings and the associated physical sensations they notice.

General Awareness Practices

- **Body Mapping:** Create a body map with the child where they can colour or label different parts of their body to indicate how they feel at various times.
- **Mirror Work:** Encourage the child to look in the mirror and describe how their body feels and looks, which can help build a connection between their internal sensations and external appearance.
- **Interactive Play:** Engage in interactive play that involves physical movement and body awareness, such as obstacle courses or Simon Says with body-focused commands. Keep drawing attention back to the body and noticing how different body parts feel.
- **Role-model talking out loud about your own sensations** eg; "My tummy is rumbling, my body is letting me know its time to eat"
- **Curious / wondering:** Regularly notice and draw attention to the child to notice their own bodily signals and show curiosity by asking questions such as "I wonder how that feels?" or "What do you think that means?"



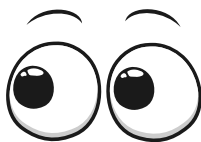
SEN

Recommendations

Many children, including children with SEN, communicate their needs and feelings through their behaviours. This can sometimes lead to tricky behaviours that may be confusing or difficult to manage. These behaviours can be a way for them to express unmet sensory needs, such as seeking or avoiding certain sensory experiences. For example, a child who frequently engages in disruptive or repetitive actions might be trying to self-regulate or find comfort due to sensory overload or a need for additional sensory input.

It's important to look beyond the behaviour itself and consider any underlying sensory needs that might be driving it. Understanding these sensory triggers can help in developing effective strategies to support the child. By observing patterns in their behaviour and identifying sensory preferences or aversions, we can tailor interventions that address these needs, reducing frustration and improving overall communication and engagement. Recognising and addressing the sensory needs behind challenging behaviours can lead to more positive outcomes and a better learning experience for the child.

Strategies for tricky behaviours



Sensory Need

Strategies to try

Hitting

- Overstimulate
- Needs space
- Body feedback

- Low Arousal / Low Demand
- Regulation/calming tools
- Space / direct from area
- Bouncing ball
- Weighted slam ball
- Heavy work/ feedback

Biting

- Overstimulated / self-soothing
- Oral feedback
- Coping with big feelings (biting self)
- Pain

- Deep pressure
- Thick liquid thin straw
- Chew / chewy foods
- Crunch ice
- Stimulation to jaw
- Rule out dental issues

Spitting

- Seeking oral input
- Seeking tactile feedback (touching spit)
- Auditory feedback from others

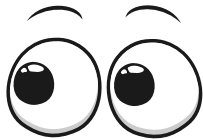
- Deep pressure
- Thick liquid thin straw
- Messy play opportunities
- Sucking/blowing games



SEN

Recommendations

Strategies for tricky behaviours



Sensory Need

Strategies to try

Hair Pulling

- Tactile seeking
- Body awareness (feedback to hands/arms)
- Auditory feedback from others

- Tactile bins
- Resistance bands/ ribbons/ elastic to pull
- Cause & effect toys
- Buttons, repetitive opportunities with a response

Head Banging

- Under stimulated (needs more sensory input)
- Over stimulated (needs less)
- Pain
- Overwhelm / grounding purpose

- Movement opportunities
- Swinging, jumping, sensory circuits, spinning
- Head inversions
- Time out / low arousal
- Calming input / safe space

Smearing Faeces

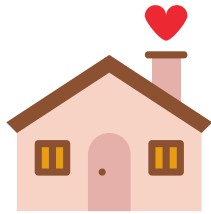
- Seeking tactile input
- Tactile sensitivities
- Seeking visual, smell or auditory input
- Medical reason
- Emotional needs

- Consider toilet paper/ flushable wipes
- Strong smells
- Stimulating environments
- Visual input
- Rule out medical issues
- Manage constipation

Screaming / Making loud noises

- Sensory seeking more auditory
- Overstimulated / covering other noises

- Cause & effect toys, communication switches
- Musical instruments
- Play music
- Ear defenders
- Heavy work/ proprioception
- Low arousal environment



HOME

Recommendations

Children with sensory needs often work hard to mask their difficulties in school or public settings, where they may feel the need to fit in or avoid drawing attention. At home, where they feel safer and more relaxed, they might begin to unmask and express their sensory needs more openly, which can sometimes lead to intense or tricky behaviours. This can make daily activities at home more difficult, as the child may be more prone to outbursts or meltdowns when they are no longer suppressing their sensory experiences.

To support these children at home, it's helpful to implement sensory strategies that address their specific needs and create a predictable routine. For example, incorporating calming routines, offering sensory breaks, and using tools like weighted blankets or noise-cancelling headphones can help manage sensory overload. Structured activities and clear routines can also provide a sense of stability and predictability. By understanding and addressing these needs at home, we can help children feel more regulated and reduce the occurrence of tricky behaviours, making daily activities more manageable for everyone.

Strategies for Home Routines

Visuals & Routines

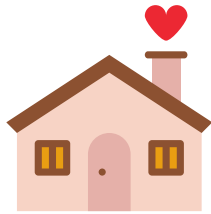


Plan your day using visual aids regardless of your child's communication level. This will help to manage their arousal levels and self-regulation by helping your child to understand the changes in their routine and what to expect. A daily schedule can be done on a "now and next" board, white board, pen and paper etc Ask your child to help, if possible, by drawing or colouring visuals.



Dressing

- **Before dressing try deep massage to your child's limbs**, using downward strokes and always try to keep one hand in contact with your child's skin to limit the number of "new tactile inputs" or encourage them to do it themselves.
- **Cut out any annoying labels**, tags from clothing
- **Wear seamless socks or turn socks inside out**
- **Try tighter clothing**, such as, lycra, as this may be less annoying than loose clothing
- **Help your child to recognise when they are becoming too hot or too cold.**
- **Reduce noise and lighting level.** Break the dressing skill down into smaller steps.
- **Dress in front of a mirror** to help your child develop some body awareness ("where is my arm in relation to my body" etc) and motor planning (how do I put my arm in my tee shirt etc)
- **Consider the position your child gets dressed in**, for example, if your child has problems with their balance, make sure they sit down to get dressed. If they find movement difficult, or difficulty keeping still in one position for long enough, make sure your child is sitting with some back support, such as on a chair, or in a corner of a room (between 2 walls), for added support.



HOME

Recommendations



Meal Times

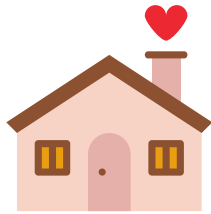
- **Allow your child to get involved with preparing the mealtime** as much as possible. For example, setting the table, carrying “heavy pots” (unbreakable if possible!) mixing ingredients (rolling, making dough etc)
- **Make sure your child’s feet can touch the floor** when sitting at the dining table. If not, place a box/step under their feet to help achieve a grounding effect (to help stabilise the upper body).
- **If your child struggles to sit still the use of an air filled, mobile sitting wedge** will help to give movement whilst remaining seated. (eg/ Move N Sit cushion).
- **The use of a weighted lap pad** or cosy blanket may also be useful.
- **Encourage chewy foods and drink through a straw** to help arousal levels and self-regulation.

- **Allow your child to get involved with running the bath or setting the shower up**, so they can set their preferred temperature. Their “just right” temperature may not be yours. Use a bath thermometer to agree with child a desired temperature so they feel they have choice & control when bathing.
- **Get undressed/dressed in the bathroom**, if possible, to prevent a transition from one room to another which may be an anxious time for some due to temperature changes. This can be “painful”, for some individuals, especially if they have significant tactile sensitivities.
- **Try different sponges/wash cloths to brush the limbs downwards when washing** (not up and down as this can be quite painful for some due to excessive movement of their arm/leg hairs).
- **Try different wash gels/soaps** until you find one that your child can tolerate or likes.
- **Encourage water play if possible**, pouring from one container to another, squeezing water bottles, drawing with shaving foam on the wall tiles etc
- **If drying your child is difficult, wrap in a warm bath towel to dry off rather than rubbing dry.**
- **Use shower visor or dry rolled up flannel/towel for child to hold over eyes to protect eyes from water during hair washing.** Some children may find tipping their head back to rinse shampoo distressing.



Bathing

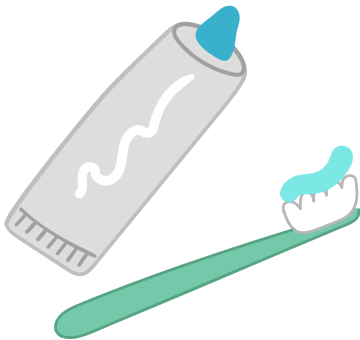
- **Give your child a deep but gentle rub down before the bath** or encourage some heavy muscle work, such as, wall push ups, crawling game, tug of war game etc depending on the age of your child. This will help to calm the nervous system.
- **Try different textured cloths** (flannel, sponge etc) and encourage your child to do it for themselves as may be less distressing.
- **Check if your child prefers baths or showers.** Let them help with the water temperature and/or water pressure as their choice will quite possibly not be yours.
- **Apply body lotion (firm, gentle massage) using downwards strokes** only to all limbs and back if your child will accept this. For older children encourage them to massage self.
- **For older children who are reluctant to shower, allow them to use music in the bathroom and encourage showering through listening to music** eg; shower for 3 songs. Having an ‘end point’ and distraction while showering may be helpful.



HOME

Recommendations

Teeth Brushing



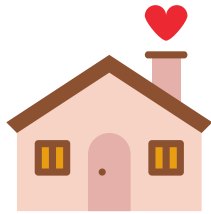
- **Encourage some heavy muscle work activity for a few minutes** prior to brushing teeth or wrap in a tight blanket to help lower anxieties around teeth brushing.
- **Try different brushes, manual brush (smaller head, double-headed, soft, firm etc) versus electric toothbrush.** Electric brushes are easier for children to use, especially if they struggle with coordination skills.
- **Try flavourless, non-foaming toothpaste (OraNurse)** if your child cannot tolerate the texture and “feel” of the toothpaste in their mouth.
- **Encourage your child to brush their own teeth**, inside their cheeks and tongue to reduce sensitivity in their mouth. Do not force your child if they cannot tolerate or do this by themselves. Allow choice/control.
- **Use a wash cloth or flannel to ‘wake up’ the mouth before brushing teeth.** Children can do this themselves or you can create a routine/ make up a song together about awaking the mouth so its ready to be cleaned.
- **Warm water** might be easier to tolerate than cold

Toileting



- **Ensure that the child's feels supported when sitting on the toilet.** Use a foot stool so that their feet are supported, consider a rail or something to hold on to (some children are frightened they might fall in!)
- **Cover the hole of the toilet with tissue paper** if they don't like looking into the toilet.
- **Try a wooden or padded toilet seat** for children who are sensitive to the cold sensation on their bottom.
- **Trial wet wipes or wet toilet paper/ flannels for wiping.** It can feel softer or warmer if rinsed under warm water first.
- **Some children are startled by the loud flush of a toilet**, so this may need to happen after they've left the bathroom.
- **For children who struggle with constipation, encourage feet to be raised on a stool and long blowing activities** (bubbles, blowing up a balloon, harmonica) as this encourages the bottom to relax
- **If bathroom smells are distressing**, provide a small container or handkerchief with a preferred scent to smell while in the bathroom.
- **Ear defenders in public toilets** might be helpful for children who are fearful of the noise of the hand dryers
- **Use distractions** like books, songs, music and pictures on the wall.
- **Use toilet stickers to help with boys aiming** into the toilet bowl and to make the process more engaging.





HOME

Recommendations

Hair Brushing



- **Try giving them a head massage** first to desensitise the scalp.
- **Use gentle yet firm brush strokes**, holding the hair as you brush to reduce pulling, and try sitting your child in front of a mirror so they can see what is happening.
- **Try using a song or rhyme as you brush.** Finish brushing when the song ends so that your child knows how long the task will take.
- **Or you could agree how many brush strokes there will be** and count together with your child
- **Try using a good detangling conditioner or detangling spray.** Some hair brushes such as 'Tangle Teezer' seem to glide more easily through hair. And keep hair shorter if your child really dislikes hair brushing.
- **Stickers or reward charts** might be helpful.
- **Keep it fun. Play 'hairdressers' with your child**, where they brush and style your hair too, and encourage your child to brush their toys' hair.
- **Give the child something to suck or chew** during hair brushing

Sleeping



- **Provide deep pressure with slow rhythms before bed** (firm hugs and rocking in a chair, wrapped tightly in a blanket and rocking by self in a chair)
- **Try different bed coverings.** Some children need more weight than a typical duvet. Some like to be wrapped tightly in a blanket or sleeping bag (for containment and sense of security/safety).
- **Weighted or lycra blankets** may be an option to try.
- **Position the bed against a wall** so your child can squish themselves against it
- **Use of a body pillow (or 2) in the bed** to allow your child to squish themselves between them.
- **Try a sleeping bag for added deep pressure** with a pillow added for extra deep pressure
- **Remember deep pressure touch can be very calming** to an over stimulated nervous system.
- **Use black-out curtains** to block light
- **Provide a night light**
- **Use white noise** to block out competing night sounds
- **Provide a pillow with familiar & calming scent**
- **Maintain a predictable routine** prior to bed e.g; bath, teeth, story, bed
- **Use transition objects for self-soothing** eg; carer and child have identical soft toy they both hold
- **Keep room organised and clear of clutter**
- **Allow child to choose white noise** - eg; nature sounds, fan noise, rain sounds
- **Avoid screen time/ high alerting activities** in the lead up to bed time
- **Provide a bed tent over the bed** to block out light



EQUIPMENT

Recommendations

Classroom Equipment

Equipment can be sourced through a number of online suppliers. Amazon usually stocks similar quality items to those which are 'branded' and more expensive. Always read the reviews and follow manufacturers guidelines.



Ear Defenders & Ear Loops

What for? Children with auditory sensitivities
Tips: Ear defenders shouldn't be used for more than 30 mins per episode. Wearing for long periods can make sensitivities even more heightened.

Some children may need prompts to wear them when accessing noisier environments. Ear loops may be more discreet for older students.



Theraband / Bouncy Band

What for? Provides proprioceptive feedback / Vestibular input which may support children who seek extra movement or present as fidgety.

Weighted lap pad

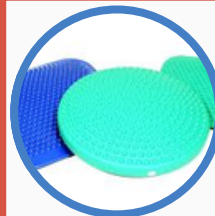
What for? Provides deep pressure/proprioceptive feedback for children who are generally overresponsive. .

Tips: Lap pad should be used at identified periods of the day to offer calming sensory input eg; during learning after transitions.



Privacy shield

What for? Children who are sensitive to visual input/ distracted by visual input. May aid with concentration.



Wobble Cushion / Move'n'sit cushion

What for?
Provides vestibular input which may support children who need/seek extra movement for concentration and focus.

Tips: Cushion should be routinely checked to see whether it has enough air in. Children should be able to wiggle on the cushion. Children's feet should remain stable on the floor. Cushion shouldn't remain in place all day, but used as a 'boost' for periods of concentration/focus.

Visual Timer

What for? Children who rely on routine/structure to support with regulation. Visual timers can be good tools for children to prepare and support with transitions, reducing overall arousal level.



Blackout Sensory Den

What for? Children who are generally over-responsive to sensory input and need a calming space within the classroom to access to regulate and return to learning.

Tips: Have access as part of a visual timetable/ sensory diet, use sensory calming items inside the den. Visual timer may be helpful to support with transition back to classroom.

Art Eraser/Putty

What for? Art putty is similar to blue tac but a good alternative for pencil cases due to it having a practical purpose. Can be a discreet tool used by children who need to fidget.

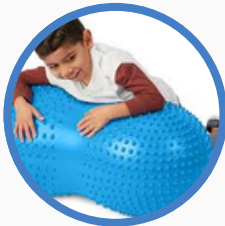




EQUIPMENT

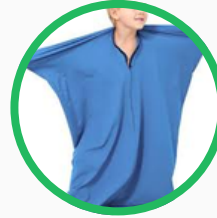
Recommendations

Home Equipment



Peanut Ball

What for? Sensory Regulation before/after school
Tips: Peanut balls can be used independently by children and in a variety of ways offering alerting or calming sensory input.



Body Sock

What for? Calming Sensory input
Tips: Encourage children to spend time in their body sock pushing against the resistance of the fabric



Trampette

What for? Vestibular & Proprioceptive input
Tips: Use as part of a sensory diet or regulation time after school. Use rhythmic bouncing for calming.



Weighted Blanket

What for? Calming Sensory input
Tips: Encourage children to spend time under their weighted blanket when its time to calm eg; reading a book, watching a tablet



Curly Straws

What for? Calming Sensory input for children with overresponsive sensory systems

Tips: Try drinking thicker liquids through the curly straws eg; yogurt, smoothies



Chew Buddy

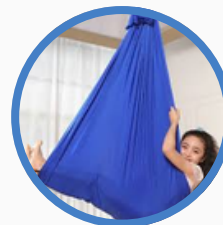
What for? Calming or Alerting Sensory input
Tips: Keep clean regularly, monitor use



Compression Wear

What for? Calming Sensory input for children with overresponsive sensory systems

Tips: Before you spend money on expensive compression wear, trial wearing a swimming costume, tight leggings or swimming rash vest under normal clothing.



Swing/Hammock

What for? Calming or Alerting Sensory input

Tips: Use as part of a sensory diet/ regulation after school.



White noise machine / Alexa type device

What for? Calming Sensory input

Tips: White noise played in the background at bedtime can help children with sensory sensitivities to fall asleep quicker and remain asleep for longer.



Sensory Den or Tent

What for? Create a 'calm down' space for children to access when feeling overloaded or to regulate after school.

Tips: Include a bean bag or cushions, blankets, favourite soothing items, battery powered fairy lights or slow moving visuals. Create a sign for the door to communicate "I need space" / "Do not Disturb"



Visual Timer

What for? Visual timers can help with transitions to next activities, agreeing time with the child so they can visually see how much time they have before moving to next activity. Can help with daily routines.



LINKS & FURTHER RESOURCES



Rotherham Specific Support

Rotherham SEND Local offer – Sensory needs:

Offer information and advice on sensory needs
<https://www.rotherhamsendlocaloffer.org.uk/health-wellbeing/sensory-needs>

Rotherham Autism information advice service:

Offer sensory workshops and training sessions for parents/carers
<https://www.rotherhamsendlocaloffer.org.uk/advice-support/autism-information-advice-service/1>

Rotherham Parent/Carer Forum

Offer sensory workshops for parents and carers
Advice and support for parents and carers in Rotherham
<https://www.rpcf.co.uk/>

Rotherham Virtual School

Host online sensory workshops for professionals & parents/carers once per month. Contact your Rotherham Primary school SENDCo or email virtualschool@rotherham.gov.uk for more information.

Sensory Strategies & Further learning

Sensory Integration Education:

Website for more courses on sensory processing for schools and parent / carers including creating a sensory friendly school environment (some are free courses all online).
<https://www.sensoryintegrationeducation.com/collections>

Griffin OT

Website full of sensory advice, blogs, training and strategies for educators and parent/carers. Kim Griffin also authors a great book “Success with Sensory Supports” available online.
<https://www.griffinot.com/>

Sheffield Sensory Service:

A great resource of videos and further sensory information.
<https://www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/services/child-development-and-neurodisability/sensory-processing-difficulties/>

Glasgow Sensory Service

NHS Glasgow Sensory website. Lots of information, interactive checklists with strategies, videos and advice to support sensory challenges.
<https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/life-skills/joining-in-with-sensory-differences/>





Specific Support

Sensory Needs & Toileting:

ERIC

<https://eric.org.uk/sensory-needs-and-toileting>

Sensory Needs & Sleep:

The Spiral Foundation guide

https://thespiralfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Sleep-and-SI-brochure_final.pdf

Sensory Equipment Advice

Sensory Direct website has guidance on choosing equipment. Including; Guidelines on choosing correct weight for weighted items, guidelines on choosing correct size for therapy balls etc.

<https://www.sensorydirect.com>

Interoception

Kelly Mahler is an Occupational Therapist who specialises in all things interoception. Her website is full of useful videos and downloadable resources

<https://www.kelly-mahler.com/>

Information & Support for Misophonia

<https://misophonia-association.org/online-support-groups/>

Sensory Needs & Eating

<https://www.arfidawarenessuk.org/resources>

Sensory Needs & Pica

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/managing-pica>

Sensory & Motor Skills

Fizzy programme is a motor skills based programme to support children who struggle with gross & fine motor skills.

<https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/healthcare-professionals/paediatric-occupational-therapy/fizzy-programme>

Autism Resources

PDA Society

Information, advice and support for professionals, parents & carers of children who may display behaviours linked to PDA

<https://www.pdasociety.org.uk>

Daisy Chain

Award winning local charity supporting autistic and neurodivergent children, young people, adults and their families. Offer free online training and virtual support sessions.

<https://daisychainproject.co.uk/product/learning-workshops/>

Autism LevelUp!

Website full of tools, visuals and resources for supporting communication and regulation

<https://www.autismlevelup.com/#tools>

Autism Education Trust

Guidance and downloads for schools & families to support with accessing education

<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources>

