



Policy Name: Sensory

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Responsible Person: Charlotte Bray; Andrew Sudron Governor

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This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies, documents and guidance: Autism Policy, Transition policy.

## Introduction

This policy document sets out the school's aims, principles and strategies for addressing the sensory needs of all pupils.

## Rationale

Our senses provide us with a means of interacting with and being part of society and enable us to understand and respond to the environment around us. Many individuals, particularly those on the autistic spectrum have difficulties in integrating or making sense of sensory inputs which often manifests itself as withdrawal, distress or challenging behaviour. Addressing sensory issues should result in increased engagement with the curriculum and therefore improved learning experiences; along with greater opportunities for engagement in both school and non-school activities. Additionally, pupils whose learning experiences are constrained by their level of physical and cognitive abilities will benefit from the documentation and review of their sensory abilities and preferences by further personalisation of their learning programmes.

## Scope



Sensory-perceptual issues common in individuals on the autistic spectrum is well documented. However, our school includes many pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties for whom a sensory approach to the curriculum is vital. Addressing sensory need and accommodating sensory preferences is important for all our pupils. Therefore, this policy applies to all pupils within school.

### **Aim**

- To inform school staff, parents and Governors of the importance of sensory issues in the education, health and wellbeing of pupils.
- To put in place a means of recording, assessing, documenting, addressing and reviewing the sensory needs, responses and preferences of pupils.
- To provide an adapted environment and personalised teaching programmes that addresses the sensory needs and requirements of pupils and so results in improved learning experiences and positively impacts on health and wellbeing.
- To focus on the need to address the impact sensory dysfunction can have on an individual's ability to engage and progress.

### **Equal Opportunities**

All pupils will have their personal sensory issues, needs and preferences documented. Where sensory perception, needs and preferences impact on education, health and wellbeing this policy and its associated procedures will be used to personalise and inform the teaching and learning of all.

### **Procedure for Sensory Profiling and Assessment**

1. All pupils whose Impact and Intervention forms that identify sensory issues as barriers to progress must have a sensory profile drawn up by observation by classbased staff. The profile outlines observed reactions to the following inputs:

- Sound
- Vision
- Movement and body awareness
- Taste and food preferences
- Smell
- Touch – hands
- Touch – body

For example, staff will record if a pupil appears to react particularly positively, negatively or unusually to certain sounds. A pupil on the autism spectrum may put their fingers in their ears and hum, pupil with SLD may laugh and move in time to



certain pieces of music whilst a pupil with PMLD may either grimace or stiffen or show unusual animation. More able and verbal pupils may contribute to their own sensory profiles. Pupils may be hypo or hyper-sensitive to stimuli and either response must be recorded.

On the reverse of each pupil's profile should be guidelines for staff as to what they can do should the pupil present different behaviours caused by sensory stressors or differences in processing.

2. Pupils with sensory profiles that identify obvious difference in sensory integration (this will include the majority of pupils on the autism spectrum) will have a full sensory assessment. The assessment used by staff at Springwater is the Sue Larkey Sensory Checklist<sup>1</sup>. The assessment should be completed by the class teacher in collaboration with parents. Work may also be done by consultants who may work to complete a different sensory profile format and implement sensory diets with students which staff can then continue to implement on a regular basis.

3. Areas where the score is very high or very low indicate areas of hyper or hyposensitivity. Pupils showing such scores will have a sensory programme or 'diet' drawn up by an O.T., consultant or class-based staff. The sensory programme may address specific issues that impact learning; for example, a pupil that constantly rocks or bangs may have a programme that gives planned opportunities for delivering that sensory input (such as frequent sessions on a swing or with a drum) with a view to rebalancing their sensory needs and reducing those behaviours at other times. The classroom environment may also be adapted through the use of specialist equipment to ensure students have ongoing opportunity to redress their sensory imbalance.

### **Role of the Occupational Therapist (O.T.)**

The O.T. has experience in assessing and interpreting sensory issues, needs and preferences but is only able to offer support for students up to six years old with sensory issues. Therefore, for older students' class-based staff or consultants will collect sensory information on pupils and teaching staff will liaise in the interpretation of sensory assessments and in establishing a sensory programme. For some students this has meant the involvement of Future Steps consultancy service who have directly assessed pupils, drawn up an individualised sensory integration plan

### **Reporting**

Sensory profiles, assessments and programmes will be reviewed at Annual Review. The O.T or consultancy team will review progress of programmes with class teachers as necessary.



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**References:**

1. 'Practical Sensory Programmes for Students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Other Special Needs', Sue Larkey 2007, Jessica Kingsley (Pub).