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SENSORY TOOLKIT
Suggested strategies document

To be used in conjunction with the framework for discussion to identify adaptations to the environment and other strategies to help meet a child's sensory needs.

Our brain recognises, organises and interprets sensory information in order for us to function. If we are able to regulate the sensory input appropriately we are able to:

· adapt to changes in our environment

· have the appropriate level of alertness and attention

· filter out irrelevant information

· 'tune in' to relevant sensory information

We all seek sensory experiences which we find comforting, interesting, calming or stimulating. We do this to self-regulate our mood.

Most of us find some sensory experiences challenging. To reduce anxiety, we avoid these sensations when we can, or find socially acceptable ways of managing such experiences.

For most children sensory processing skills develop in the course of ordinary childhood activities. However, some children experience sensory differences which impact on their well-being, potential to achieve and their ability to play and socialise.

These children may need extra support to develop self-regulation. They will need help to develop the sensory skills to calm themselves or make themselves more alert.

It is hoped that this document will go some way in helping identify ways of supporting such children.

Points to note when using this document:

Wherever possible an appropriate involve the child in developing a plan to meet their sensory needs.

Always seek medical advice to rule out an underlying medical reason for the behaviours being displayed.

Be aware that the child may not display sensory differences all of the time - they may change from day to day and hour to hour. Physical and mental wellbeing can all impact on how well we are able to process and manage sensory input. Have you ever turned off the radio in the car when you are lost / stressed? All kinds of things can temporarily disrupt our ability to regulate sensory information.

A child may be both over sensitive and under sensitive to sensory input.

For the purposes of this document 2 broad categories are used:

Over responsive - a child who, at times, experiences sensory input more intensely than others. This is when the body misinterprets sensory information as aversive, negative and out of proportion to sensory input. These children may have extreme reactions to some sensory input and may actively avoid certain situations. The function of behaviours is to avoid / escape the sensory input in an attempt to calm/ organize. Children will often manipulate the environment to make it a safe place.

Under responsive - a child who, at times, experiences sensory input less intensely than others. This is when the body doesn't process sensory information effectively and the child acts passively or seek out more sensory input. If the child seeks out more sensory input they may not often choose the most organising actions and it can often quickly tip them into over aroused. The sensory need is very much a driving force and can override everything else. Some children can block out the need if they are very interested in something, but not for long periods.

Remember:

Motion activities (including vestibular) alert and organise but they can also over alert. To avoid over alerting follow up with pressure or heavy work activities.

Pressure and touch activities (including tactile and vestibular) calm and settle. Use as a get ready, regrouping or transition strategy. They should often be used after motion activities.

Heavy work activities involve muscle effort. The effort and resistance activities of push, pull and pressure are calming and the motion is alerting resulting in a nice mix.

Oral motor activities both alert and calm. They can help the child listen and focus.

Routines and planning are important as positive, calm behaviour is gained through predictability and familiarity.

It is important to note that sometimes the child may experience sensory overload and benefit from a retreat space / access to a quieter, less overwhelming environment.

Use the following ideas to build up a programme of environmental adaptations and activities for the child to help meet their sensory needs.

TACTILE (touch)

If there are concerns in this area medical advice should be sought to rule out any medical difficulties.

The tactile system has two functions. One is protective and informs us of danger e.g. that's hot. The other is discriminative and gives us information about objects and our environment that allows us to develop refined fine motor skills. The tactile system helps with motor planning, body awareness and self regulation.
With a smoothly operating tactile system a young person will be comfortable and willing to interact with objects and people and will be in an alert and calm state to learn. Children and young people who are over responsive to tactile input often dislike close physical contact with others and struggle to tolerate some textures against their skin.

Tactile - over responsive

Actions that may indicate over responsiveness	Things to try
Framework for discussion points: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 Avoids certain foods. Struggles with lining up. Avoids messy activities. Overreacts when falls over.	**Modify the environment** **Introduce calming activities** **Make things as predictable as possible** **Use proprioceptive activities (see proprioception section) especially before and after activities with a tactile element.** • Try activities in PE that emphasise joint compression (jumping, pushing, pulling, weight bearing, skipping). • Allow them to stand at the back or the front of the line (to reduce touch input). • Review where they hang their coat/bag make it at the end of the rack not in the middle. • Teach appropriate ways to ask for personal space. • Be aware of situations with lots of people close together, crowded rooms and corridors and make adjustments. • Be aware of distance between chairs/mats for sitting in circle to allow space. • Teach all children about the rules for personal space. • Give visual cues to mark personal space where possible.

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	• Be mindful messy activities such as using finger paints, glue clay, dough could be 'painful' . • Avoid light touch - use firm pressure when touching the child and always approach from the front. • If touch is necessary give the child prior warning. • Choose PE activities which do not include physical contact from others i.e. gym circuits, sensory circuits, obstacle courses, hop scotch. • Be aware of places which may induce unexpected touch – child placed in a main walkway, leaning over them when working at a desk, others tapping them on the arm or shoulder. • Be aware clothing may feel painful, especially seams in clothing or socks, folds in clothing and labels. • **Food:** If tactile over response is a likely cause to children refusing some food textures, do not introduce new foods at meal times this will cause more anxiety. • **Food:** If wanting to introduce new foods bear in mind the textures the child likes. • **Food:** try a gradual desensitisation to foods away from mealtimes

Tactile - under responsive

Actions that may indicate under responsiveness	**Things to try**

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Framework for discussion points: 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 Licks or mouths inedible objects. Chews clothing or objects. Doesn't react to painful experiences. May seek out touch.	**Modify the environment** **Introduce alerting activities (especially prior to work tasks)** **For children who seek out sensation provide acceptable sensory activities to meet sensory needs** • Encourage the child to experience as many tactile experiences as possible through play activities e.g. messy play, feely box, Playdough / Theraputty. • Access to fidget toys (set boundaries for their use and ensure they don't negatively impact on their attention to task). • Cuddle stuffed animal toys or favourite blankets/cushions. • Manipulate various putties/dough into shapes and letters. • Find objects hidden in a container of sand/beans/macaroni/rice etc. • Play water games with squirt guns or water balloons. • Write and colour with a vibrating pen. • Squeeze or walk on bubble wrap. • Use textured balls, cloths and mitts. • Finger paint. • Walk barefoot on different surfaces. • Paint body parts with powder using a brush. • Rub arms and legs using a variety of textures (note likes and dislikes and use this information to build on activities). • Roll over different surfaces.

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	• Comfy corner filled with large cushions and pillows. • Gentle touch and tickle.

VESTIBULAR (balance)

If there are concerns in this area medical advice should be sought to rule out any medical difficulties.

The vestibular system is located in our inner ear. It is a movement-detection system that consists of gravity receptors to inform us about movement of our head and body against gravity. It helps us understand the position of our head and body in space and gives us information about which way is up and where we are going. It helps us with balance, spatial orientation, and maintaining a stable visual image, even when we are in motion.

The vestibular system is a major organiser of sensory input and is considered to be an influential sensory system and has tremendous impact on a child's ability to function daily.

A child with an over responsive vestibular system is likely to resist input and will have high levels of anxiety or fear in response to movement. They may have excessive emotional reactions, even when there is no danger of falling. They may try to control and manipulate events to avoid stressful sensations which may appear to others as obstinate and uncooperative behaviour.

A child who is under responsive to vestibular input will often enjoy movement and seek it out but may be uncoordinated.

Some vestibular difficulties may fit into either category e.g. poor balance, difficulty walking on uneven surfaces, poor hand eye coordination etc.

NOTE: When working with a child with vestibular difficulties it is important to discourage spinning as this can be very disorganising. Vestibular work should be followed by a calm proprioceptive activity to assist with organisation and the correct level of self-regulation.

Vestibular - over responsive

Actions that may indicate over responsiveness	**Things to try**
Framework for discussion points: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Avoids apparatus or fast moving playground equipment. Gets dizzy or car sick easily. Fearful of jumping. Always holds rails or furniture.	**Modify the environment** **Introduce calming activities** **Make things as predictable as possible** **Use proprioceptive activities (see proprioception section) following vestibular work to assist with the correct level of self-regulation.** • Use a firm supportive seat that will not tip, to help the child feel stable and secure whilst sat at their desk. Make sure their feet stay flat on the ground.

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	• Make allowances in PE, e.g. reduce the amount of vestibular activity, i.e. forward rolls or activities where the feet are off the ground etc. Allow the young person to increase their ability to work on moveable or suspended equipment at their own pace e.g. start with a line on the floor to balance on and raise the height as the child becomes more confident • Allow the child to be at the front or back of the line when negotiating stairs. • When ascending and descending stairs, allow child to use the handrail. • Allow child to leave class 5 minutes early to avoid busy corridors. • Use visual markers so a child has a clear aim of where to go / sit.
Vestibular - **under responsive**	
Actions that may indicate under responsiveness	**Things to try**
Framework for discussion points:	**Modify the environment**

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8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 Excessive movement and difficulty sitting still. Difficulty maintaining attention. Poor balance. Poor eye hand coordination. Doesn't get dizzy with spinning. Poor sitting posture.	**Introduce alerting activities (especially prior to work tasks)** **For children who seek out sensation provide acceptable sensory activities to meet sensory needs** **Use proprioceptive activities (see proprioception section) following vestibular work to assist with organisation and the correct level of self-regulation.** • Consider activities which challenge the centre of gravity and cause the head to move out of alignment. For example: - Jumping on a trampoline - Hopping, skipping and running - Tumbling and gymnastics - Animal walks – crab walk, bear walk, duck walk, kangaroo jumps - Monkey bars, climbing frames, spinning wheels, slides - Yoga or pilates - Using a therapy/exercise ball - Wheelbarrow walks. • Allow for regular movement breaks e.g. short breaks to walk around classroom, to carry out a chore. • Use a 'move and sit' cushion.

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	• Using a 'defined' spot for them e.g. carpet square, sequencing spot during carpet time or assembly. • A regular change of position can help them to maintain their attention e.g. Lying on tummy, sitting on the floor, sitting on a chair during circle time, kneeling. • Work with in success; if they can stay in circle well for 20 seconds, use this as your baseline and increase your time from this point. Try a short walk around the circle and then try sitting again. • Have a box of fine motor activities that they are allowed to go to during transitions between lessons or classroom activities. E.g. puzzles, threading, peg boards, pencil tasks. • Provide as many opportunities as possible for active work during the day • Provide a solid seat with armrests of the correct height. • Provide a Tilted desk top (angle board) to help them to maintain an upright posture. • Provide 'heavy work' activities (see proprioception section) during the day especially prior to handwriting tasks or those which require long periods of sitting. • Access to a fidget toy to keep their hands busy.

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PROPRIOCEPTION (body awareness)

If there are concerns in this area medical advice should be sought to rule out any medical difficulties.

Proprioception is about our movement and body position. It's the messages we get from our muscles and joints about where we are in space without needing our eyes to tell us. It informs us how fast we are moving and how much force to apply. The information is passed from our muscles and joints even when we are still. This ensures we can be upright and not slip off our chair.

Proprioception is thought to be able to calm and override other sensory systems therefore use of proprioceptive activities is always beneficial.

The common difficulties with processing of proprioceptive information appear to be a lack of sufficient information (under responsive). Over responsive proprioception systems are very uncommon as proprioceptive input has the potential to be both calming and alerting.

Proprioceptive 'heavy work' activities are calming and organising and can be used to calm and organise all of our sensory systems. For example if we are having difficulties in our tactile sense we use proprioceptive activities to override these difficulties, e.g. when we bump into something and hurt ourselves we automatically rub it better. This is utilising the proprioceptive system (rubbing uses deep muscles) to inhibit the tactile response (pain in the area bumped).

Proprioception - under responsive

Actions that may indicate over responsiveness	**Things to try**
Framework for discussion points: 1 - 13 Fidgets. Heavy handed. Needs to look at their hand when they are writing / using a mouse. Needs to look at their feet when they are climbing. Chews things. High pain threshold. Presents as floppy and appears to have weak muscles.	**Modify the environment** **Introduce calming activities** **Make things as predictable as possible** Consider any activity that causes muscle to repetitively stretch, bend or move and activities that are hard work or resistive. Activities that require movements that are forwards and backwards (linear) are calming. Those that are in circles are arousing. Wherever possible involve the child in choosing activities that they enjoy. Schedule in regular movement breaks to ensure a child is getting the movement they need before they start to seek it out themselves. • Push 5 (standing opposite someone making a high five touch and pushing against it). • Chair push ups - Place palms on each side of the seat, push down and lift your bottom off chair. Hold position for as long as you can; make sure feet are off the floor, as this means you will put more weight through your arms.

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Tends to play roughly. Seeks out movement. All children may present with some of these behaviours but a child experiencing sensory differences is more likely to present with many of the behaviours or some of them to an extreme degree.	• Wall pushes - stand arms length away from the wall, with hands at shoulder height, keep back and legs straight and bend your arms to do push ups. • Floor push-ups. • Prior to handwriting have the child do some warm ups including….pressing palms together, pulling each fingertip, press the palms on to the desk, chair push ups with hands flat on the seat pushing their body up. • Playdough or Theraputty use to warm up the hands ready for handwriting tasks. • Timetable in regular movement breaks. • Provide 'heavy work' activities during the day especially prior to handwriting tasks or those which require long periods of sitting. • Allocate the child jobs to provide movement breaks. • A regular change of position can help them to maintain their attention e.g. Lying on tummy, sitting on the floor, sitting on a chair during circle time, kneeling. • Work with in success; if they can sit well for 20 seconds, use this as your baseline and increase your time from this point. Try a short walk around the circle and then try sitting again. • Have a box of fine motor activities that they are allowed to go to during transitions between lessons or classroom activities e.g. puzzles, threading, peg boards, pencil tasks. • Provide as many opportunities as possible for active work during the day. • Using a 'defined' spot for them e.g. carpet square, sequencing spot during carpet time or assembly. • Writing on different textures (sandpaper, plastic stitching material, carpet, pavements with chalk etc).

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Proprioceptive 'heavy work' activities are calming and organising and can be used to calm and organise all of our sensory systems. For example if we are having difficulties in our tactile sense we use proprioceptive activities to override these difficulties, e.g. when we bump into something and hurt ourselves we automatically rub it better. This is utilising the proprioceptive system (rubbing uses deep muscles) to inhibit the tactile response (pain in the area bumped).

- Fidget toys.
- Squeeze Theraputty or dough or have a squish box containing things that can be squished.
- Bear hugs.
- Comfy corner filled with large cushions and pillows.
- Gentle helper squishes.
- Teaching a self-squeeze.
- Massage activities Hand massage and knuckle press.
- Massage – using firm pressure touch on arms, legs, palms of hands and feet.
- Making faces, gurning.

- Use of a lycra band to play games such as row your boat.
- Jumping on a trampoline.
- Play carpet games such as commando crawling and rolling.
- Pillow fights.
- Playing tug of war.
- Wheelbarrow walks.
- Hot dog mat press (allow a child to lay between a layer of gym mats).
- Animal walks – crab walk, bear walk, duck walk, kangaroo jumps.
- Rolling games e.g. roll the child up tightly in a blanket or rug leaving their face exposed.
- Any leisure / sports activities such as swimming, climbing, ball games, crawling through tunnels.

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	• Use lap / shoulder pads (or wheat bags) for increased proprioceptive input when seated (think about weight ratio - no more than 10% of child's body weight). • Carry a backpack with a bit of weight in (no more than 10% of child's body weight). • Wear leg weights during P.E or when walking to and from school. • Tie a theraband around the legs of a chair or table for child to push their legs against for resistance. • Pull theraband/resistive bands and hold for 10 seconds. • Provide a solid seat with armrests of the correct height. • Provide a Tilted desk top (angle board) to help them to maintain an upright posture. • Provide a 'move and sit' cushion which allows them to have the sensation of movement in a more appropriate and less distracting way for the classroom environment. • Use a 'move n sit' cushion to sit on to give them additional feedback. • Use bean bags for down time, rest rooms. • Use of a therapy / gym ball: - sit on the ball to complete tasks - lay on the ball to do tasks that involve reaching for things - roll the ball over the child while laying down (avoid the face area) • See oral section for proprioceptive activities involving the mouth.

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AUDITORY

If there are concerns in this area a hearing test should always be undertaken to rule out any other medical difficulties.

Auditory processing refers to how the brain recognises and makes sense of sounds. Sounds consist of loudness, pitch, how long it lasts for and where it is coming from. We automatically put all of this information together and respond appropriately to it.

We can usually block out unwanted noise so we can concentrate on the noise we need to do the task we want to.

For young people who have auditory processing difficulties noise can be painful and very distracting if they are over sensitive to it. If they are under sensitive they do not register noise in the same way as others.

Note - the use of ear defenders is mentioned as a strategy. Wherever possible they should be used with the long term intention of reducing the amount of time worn. For example if worn in assembly they are removed for a minute, then 2 minutes and so on. It is important to gradually reduce the amount of time the ear defenders are worn to assist the child to become more used to distracting background noises.

Auditory **- over responsive**

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Proprioceptive 'heavy work' activities are calming and organising and can be used to calm and organise all of our sensory systems. For example if we are having difficulties in our tactile sense we use proprioceptive activities to override these difficulties, e.g. when we bump into something and hurt ourselves we automatically rub it better. This is utilising the proprioceptive system (rubbing uses deep muscles) to inhibit the tactile response (pain in the area bumped).

Actions that may indicate over responsiveness	**Things to try**
Framework for discussion points: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11 Easily distracted. Difficulties following instructions. Dislikes noisy settings. Distracted by noises others do not notice. Frequently asks others to be quiet. Appears not to hear what you say (or respond to verbal cues).	**Modify the environment** **Introduce calming activities (especially prior to and during noisy activities or environments)** **Make things as predictable as possible** **Use proprioceptive activities (see proprioception section) especially before and after activities with a noise element.** • Seat the child away from auditory distractions, such as fans, heaters, windows, doors etc. (note - you may not notice the sounds yourself). • Remove or replace unnecessary noises e.g. use a digital clock instead of a ticking clock, remove the buzzing light bulb from above the child who has an auditory sensitivity. • Seat child away from the offending noise, e.g. window, door, clock, data projector • If it is not possible to remove the distracting noises, allow the child to wear **ear defenders** or headphones when particularly distressed by the noise or when completing focussed work. • Allow child to move to a quiet / calm area when doing focused work. • Seat child away from classmates who tend to be chatty and noisy • Be aware of the noise level in the classroom and reduce background noise if a child is becoming distracted. • Use a visual cue to control the noise in the classroom e.g. a volume control icon or a traffic light system.

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PROPRIOCEPTION (body awareness)

If there are concerns in this area medical advice should be sought to rule out any medical difficulties.

Proprioception is about our movement and body position. It's the messages we get from our muscles and joints about where we are in space without needing our eyes to tell us. It informs us how fast we are moving and how much force to apply. The information is passed from our muscles and joints even when we are still. This ensures we can be upright and not slip off our chair.

Proprioception is thought to be able to calm and override other sensory systems therefore use of proprioceptive activities is always beneficial.

The common difficulties with processing of proprioceptive information appear to be a lack of sufficient information (under responsive). Over responsive proprioception systems are very uncommon as proprioceptive input has the potential to be both calming and alerting.

Proprioceptive 'heavy work' activities are calming and organising and can be used to calm and organise all of our sensory systems. For example if we are having difficulties in our tactile sense we use proprioceptive activities to override these difficulties, e.g. when we bump into something and hurt ourselves we automatically rub it better. This is utilising the proprioceptive system (rubbing uses deep muscles) to inhibit the tactile response (pain in the area bumped).

	• Use the child's name or a visual cue to gain their attention before giving new work, instructions or directions.
	• Use a visual support to aid processing and understanding of instructions e.g. visual work system, typed notes on a handout, pictures, keeping instructions on board etc.
	• Use visual supports to increase attention:
	  ○ Give demonstrations and written or visual information to support verbal instructions.
	  ○ Prior to a discussion, write down two or three main points for child to listen for; then check for memory and understanding of those points.
	• Wait for the room to become quiet before giving the instructions.
	• Break complicated directions into fewer parts and give the child time to complete the first step before going on to the next part.
	• Reduce the volume and amount of speech you use. Use visual strategies to support when giving instructions.
	• Speak clearly, with a moderate rate, and stand in one place, preferably facing the child.
	• Allow the child a longer time to respond when asking questions. Some children may need extra quiet time to process information before responding to a question. Interrupting children during this processing time can confuse their thought process.
	• Encourage the child to ask for help or clarification.
	  ○ The child may need to be taught how to do this.
	  ○ Some children prefer to use a help card rather than ask for help verbally.
	
	• Prepare the child before entering a noisy environment by warning them in advance (put it on their timetable).
	• Use a **visual timer** to show the child how long he is to stay in the room.

PROPRIOCEPTION (body awareness)

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	• Allow the child to wear **ear defenders** to reduce the noise input. • Allow the child to listen to music through headphones. Sometimes listening to a preferred noise helps 'block out' distracting noises. • Provide the child with a **visual scale** to indicate when they are becoming distressed and need a **calm quiet** area. • Teach children appropriate phrases to use when feeling distressed by noise e.g. "I am finding it very noisy here". "Could you please speak more quietly?" • If it is group work time in the classroom and it is essential for classmates to speak freely, allow the child with an auditory sensitivity to wear **ear defenders** for short breaks or to leave the room for short breaks. • Teach the child alternative strategies when feeling overwhelmed by people talking e.g. putting hands over ears, putting on headphones, **calming exercises**. • Allow the child access to quiet areas with fewer people in the dining hall and playground.

Auditory - **under responsive**

Actions that may indicate under responsiveness	**Things to try**
Framework for discussion points: 9, 10, 11, 12	**Modify the environment** **Introduce alerting activities (especially prior to work tasks) and increased sensory input**

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	For children who seek out sensation provide acceptable sensory activities to meet sensory needs
Talks aloud, hums etc. to keep focus. Finds it a challenge to understand what has been said.	• Is the child aware they are humming? Ask the child to hum more quietly. • Allow the child to use headphones to listen to favourite music. • Provide the child with alternative sensory input to increase alertness and concentration. Examples may include holding a **fidget toy** or sitting on a **tactile cushion**. • Include planned breaks (made clear on their timetable) to allow the child access to auditory input at regular intervals throughout the day e.g. allowing the child to listen to music before and after quiet work times. • Provide visual instructions for tasks e.g. on a worksheet or on a whiteboard. • Have clear framing / structures to support completion of tasks set.

VISUAL

If there are concerns in this area an eye test should always be undertaken to rule out any other medical difficulties.

Visual processing refers to how the brain selects and responds appropriately to visual input. This allows us to process what we see. When we can visually process we are able to concentrate on what we are looking at and not be distracted by other visual stimuli, i.e. we can pick out a specific picture on a wall full of them.

Young people who have visual processing difficulties can be very easily distracted by things in the environment and they may be unable to pick out things when faced by a lot of visual input. Faces can be very visually overwhelming and looking at a person's face while they are expected to listen can be very difficult for some children. Some children find visual information less overwhelming if they look with their peripheral vision.

Visual **processing difficulties**

Actions that may indicate visual processing issues	**Things to try**
Framework for discussion points: 1 - 10 Over responsive to bright lights and colours. Easily distracted by other visual stimuli. Prefers to use peripheral vision. Can lose concentration/place when working on visual tasks/reading. Complains of headaches or rubs eyes a lot.	**Modify the environment** **Introduce calming activities** **Make things as predictable as possible** **Use proprioceptive activities (see proprioception section) especially before and after activities with a strong visual element.** • Consider the lighting in the environment - lamp lighting is less visually stressful than overhead lighting, keep lights dimmed, and use natural light when possible. • Seat the child away from the source of light or make sure they aren't directly under a light source. • Allow the child to wear lightly tinted sunglasses indoors and sunglasses or a baseball cap outdoors. • Be mindful of reflective surfaces around the classroom / school environment which may concentrate or magnify light source. • Prepare child before entering environments with different lighting or strong lighting. • Certain wall paint colours help in reducing visual stress e.g. neutral shades. • Provide child with a visual scale to indicate when they are becoming distressed by light.

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Young people who have visual processing difficulties can be very easily distracted by things in the environment and they may be unable to pick out things when faced by a lot of visual input. Faces can be very visually overwhelming and looking at a person's face while they are expected to listen can be very difficult for some children. Some children find visual information less overwhelming if they look with their peripheral vision.

	• Reduce visual distractions and keep the classroom / their workspace clutter free and organised. • Limit the amount of visual material hanging from ceiling or walls, especially in the child's eye line. • Seat child away from doors, windows, colourful displays and slatted blinds. • Switch off computers and interactive whiteboards when not in use - screensavers can be distracting. • Store resources out of sight if possible, or cover with plain pieces of fabric e.g. a plain white shower curtain. • Avoid patterned carpet of flooring. • When speaking to the child / class, stand in front of a blank wall so the child is not distracted by visual input behind you. • When speaking to a child who is easily overwhelmed by visual input, limit excessive body language and facial expression. • Provide desk partitions or boundaries to reduce distractions and help the child concentrate on their work and what is going on in their immediate visual field. • Seat them at the front of the class so they aren't distracted by other children when looking at the board. • Include as much white space as possible on worksheets; if necessary have information printed on more pages to increase white space. • Keep the amount of visual information on worksheet to a minimum or cut them into strips / sections. • Reduce the amount of colour used on written materials or run through a copier for a black and white version. • Provide **desk partitions** or boundaries to reduce distractions and help the child concentrate on their work and what is going on in their immediate visual field.

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	• Provide visual aids to facilitate copying from book or board or provide a written sheet on the desk to copy from rather than copying from the board. A whiteboard is useful as lines can be rubbed out once they've been copied. • Use a finger or ruler to mark where reading. • Use a typo scope when reading (cut out a window in a piece of card and show only what is needed to be read). • Use an angled writing surface to reduce the distance the eyes have to travel from the board to the paper. • Use a touch screen instead of computer mouse when using computer. • Use different colours for different lines of text on the board. • Provide a written sheet on the desk to copy from rather than copying from the board. • Use large print books/work sheets. • Do not insist on eye contact - the child may be listening and paying attention without making eye contact – in fact not looking at you might be enhancing the ability to process verbal information. • Do not ask the child to "Look at me". This is a vague instruction; it could mean look at my face or look at my hand, and it can again cause unnecessary stress. • Teach the child to look near the eyes instead of directly at the eyes or to fix on another point instead. • Focusing on the lips or the hair line while someone is talking is a good way to show interest and improve comprehension without the sensory overload that comes from a direct gaze.

ORAL

If there are concerns in this area medical / dental advice should be sought to rule out any medical / dental difficulties.

Our mouths give feedback about taste and texture. Our brain makes sense of the sensory input so we are able to respond appropriately i.e. spit out something that tastes 'off'. The sense of taste is very closely linked to our sense of smell.

Oral - over responsive

Actions that may indicate over responsiveness	Things to try
Framework for discussion points: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Avoids certain foods. Dislikes lunchtimes. Dislikes teeth brushing. May gag easily.	**Modify the environment** **Introduce calming activities** **Make things as predictable as possible** **Use proprioceptive activities (see proprioception section) especially before and after activities with an oral element.** • Use heavy work activities to calm their sensory system down prior to eating. Not going into lunch on first sitting can help with this. • Prepare the mouth for eating - hold a vibrating toy or toothbrush around or in the mouth - chew on tubing - play mouth games, whistle, blow bubbles, blow a windmill • Try and reduce the impact of other sensory input whilst eating, i.e. find them a quiet place to eat. • Accept that they may not like some foods and offer alternatives. • Offer taste preferences during challenging times.

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	• Involve them with food as much as possible outside of mealtimes. • Eat cold food before hot food.

Oral - under responsive

Actions that may indicate under responsiveness	**Things to try**
Framework for discussion points: 6, 7, 8 Displays a strong desire for a taste sensation. Licks or mouths inedible objects. Chews clothing or objects. Overfills mouth when eating.	**Modify the environment** **Introduce alerting activities (especially prior to work tasks)** **For children who seek out sensation provide acceptable sensory activities to meet sensory needs** • Introduce activities that make the mouth work hard - blow bubbles with a straw - suck drinks through a thin or squiggly straw - drink thick shakes through a straw - sip liquids through a sports bottle rather than a cup - eat frozen grapes or frozen food, crunchy snacks -suck on ice lollies

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	• Provide alternatives for them to put in their mouth - Chewelry chew objects, tubing, vibrating toothbrushes • Spice up their food.

OLFACTORY (smell)

If there are concerns in this area medical advice should be sought to rule out any medical difficulties.

Our sense of smell travels directly to the part of the brain linked to our emotions, memory and learning. Our brain makes sense of the sensory input so we are able to respond appropriately i.e. respond to a burning smell. Smells don't go away but our brains are generally able to stop noticing them. Children who are over responsive to smell may not be able to do this effectively. A child who is over responsive to smells tends to avoid people, objects, food or places associated with smells that are offensive to them. They may be reluctant to touch things for fear of getting the small on their hands. An under responsive child may seek out smells or be unaware of them. They may use their sense of smell in inappropriate ways as they interact with people or objects.
The sense smell of is very closely linked to our sense of taste.

Olfactory - over responsive

Actions that may indicate over responsiveness	**Things to try**
Framework for discussion points: 1, 2, 3, 4, Avoids certain foods. Doesn't appear to get used to smells. Distracted by smells in the room and struggles to focus on the lesson. Dislikes lunchtimes.	**Modify the environment** **Introduce calming activities (especially prior to and during smelly activities or environments)** **Make things as predictable as possible** **Use proprioceptive activities (see proprioception section) especially before and after activities with an olfactory element.** • Use heavy work activities to calm their sensory system down prior smelly activities / environments. Not going into lunch on first sitting can help with this. • Allow them to have their favourite scent or an object they like the smell of to block out 'offensive' smells. • Prepare the child for smells they may encounter beforehand. • Teach a strategy that can be used in difficult situations. • Use unscented products if scented ones are intolerable.

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The sense smell of is very closely linked to our sense of taste.

Olfactory - under responsive

Actions that may indicate under responsiveness	**Things to try**
Framework for discussion points: 5, 6, Smells people or objects.	**Modify the environment** **Introduce alerting activities (especially prior to work tasks)** **For children who seek out sensation provide acceptable sensory activities to meet sensory needs** • Add scents to dough to play with. • Take a 'smelly walk' outside and talk about the smells. • Play games identifying scents.