

Sensory Strategies - Classroom

The classroom environment can be confusing and distracting at a sensory level. Below are a list of strategies to consider in the classroom setting.



Sensory Strategies:

Tactile

- Teach others to touch the child firmly (but not too firmly – firmer pressure is usually less threatening than light touch)
- Tell the child when they are going to be touched
- Approach child from within their visual field
- Position child at start or end of line
- Provide deep pressure into palm of hands prior to messy play e.g. via firm clapping, hand over hand support
- Positioning in classroom – facing board/ teacher but avoiding window/ door where possible
- Hand fidget toy to support listening e.g. stress ball, blue tack, pipe cleaner etc.
- Use of carpet tile when floor sitting to give the child their own clear space

Auditory



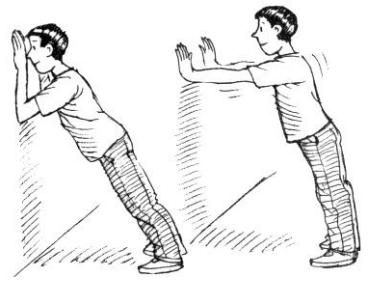
- Eliminate or move child away from high-pitched continuous noises and sharp startling noises.
- Make a quiet place available for child to work, consider seating at the front of the classroom and/or 1:1 teaching.
- Allow the use of 'proximal blockers' (i.e. earplugs)/headphones to help dampen background noise
- Allow the child to listen to chosen soothing sound through headphones.
- You may need to *gradually* expose the child to certain sounds to increase tolerance and coping or wherever possible give the child verbal or visual warning before loud sounds occur.
- Use visual strategies such as 'Social Stories' to explain about noisy situations and to teach coping strategies.
- Break instructions down (short and simple) and get child to repeat back to ensure understanding.

Visual

- Seat child away from direct sunlight or bright areas of the room.
- Recognise that positioning that gives direct, clear, unimpeded visual access to the teacher may be necessary.
- Avoid fluorescent bulbs if possible. Consider allowing the child to wear dark glasses even inside the room. Sometimes tinted lenses can help concentration on text by reducing glare from the page.
- Teach the child to cup hands around eyes to block overwhelming peripheral vision.
- Provide an area for working that is as 'distraction-free' as possible (i.e. facing a blank wall, screened workstation). This area can be used to varying degrees depending on the child's needs.
- Limit visual distraction in the environment as much as possible – clutter, 'visual noise' of displays, etc.
- Use visual strategies to allow the pupil to request sensory breaks i.e. movement tokens or get out of class card

Movement

- Provide regular movement breaks in the classroom to help organisation and attention level
- Help teacher to hand out equipment of move chairs to provide 'heavy work' input, this can help the child achieve a calm/alert state.
- Allow the child to change body position regularly and complete work in different position e.g. standing or kneeling on the floor.
- Some children benefit from sitting on a 'move n sit' cushion to provide dynamic movement and feedback



Behavioural Strategies:

- Visual timetable
- Visual support systems e.g. organisational strips, activity breakdown strips
- Reward system
- Seated next to teacher
- Social stories
- Give choices and be flexible
- Consider routines, rules and boundaries from all adults
- Plan transition times (between lessons)