**** **Specialist Provision**

**Complex Communication**

**& Interaction**

**Environmental sensory audit and checklist for schools and classrooms\***

*This sensory audit and checklist is designed to help school staff assess and create an environment that enables the participation of pupils with sensory differences associated with complex communication and interaction needs including autism. It gives some ideas on the ways in which a setting might be adjusted when pupils experience sensory difficulties.*

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| **Visual** | | |
| **Good practice and evidence to look for** | **Current Situation** | **Action required** |
| Classroom illumination is suitable for pupils with sensory differences.   * Fluorescent lights are regularly checked and changed. (Flickering lights can be very disturbing.) * The effects of light coming into the room through blinds and creating distracting patterns are minimised * Light reflecting on objects such as metal or shiny surfaces in the classroom is minimised. |  |  |
| The classroom is orderly and not cluttered so that pupils can make sense of the environment.   * The impact of wall displays is considered. (Busy and cluttered wall displays can be distracting). * Designated areas for specific activities to give clarity to the classroom organisation. * Pupils have the opportunity to work at a workstation to focus their attention if necessary |  |  |
| **Auditory** | | |
| **Good practice and evidence to look for** | **Current Situation** | **Action required** |
| Sounds from classroom equipment are kept to a minimum.   * Televisions, videos, audio systems, lights and computers are switched off when not in use to avoid a mains hum. |  |  |
| There are strategies in place to reduce noise when rooms are in use.   * Consideration is given to the noise created by the movement of people, chairs and desks and adjustments made * The acoustics of the gym, dining hall and hall are checked and modified to lessen echo |  |  |
| Sounds from outside the classroom do not cause problems within classrooms.   * Consideration is given to road noise, building noise, etc. |  |  |
| There are agreed strategies in place when noise becomes too much for individual pupils.   * There is a quiet room available which provides a calm place for pupils to relax. |  |  |
| Pupils are warned if a loud noise or bell is going to sound.   * Strategies are put in place to support pupils who find loud noises or fire bells very difficult to tolerate. |  |  |
| **Smell** | | |
| **Good practice** | **Current Situation** | **Action required** |
| Smells within the classroom are kept to a minimum.   * The smell of paints, glue, clay and cleaning fluids is minimal. * Staff are aware that the smell of perfumes and deodorants may be distressing. * Staff are aware that pupils may react to the smell of others. |  |  |
| Smells from outside the classroom are monitored and reduced, where possible   * Alternative toileting arrangements are allowed (e.g. possible use of staff or disabled toilets). * The smell of cooking from the cafeteria or food technology rooms is reduced. |  |  |
| **Tactile** | | |
| **Good practice** | **Current Situation** | **Action required** |
| Uncomfortable clothing (seams, inflexible or itchy fabrics) is avoided, where possible, unless there are safety issues   * Variations of the school uniform offer enough flexibility to enable pupils to be able to wear clothing they find comfortable. * Willingness of the school to adapt the school uniform (e.g. wear a sweatshirt, a necktie loosely or one that pins on). |  |  |
| Alternative arrangements are made for pupils who find writing to be physically painful or difficult.   * Willingness of the school to allow some work or homework to be typed. * Use of a computer or alternative recording method for written work |  |  |
| Seating is comfortable.   * Cushions may be used * Pupils are allowed to sit on carpet squares if the floor is not carpeted. |  |  |
| **General sensory issues** | | |
| **Good practice and evidence to look for** | **Current Situation** | **Action required** |
| Pupils are encouraged to let others know if they are finding a sensory aspect of the environment distressing.   * Pupils know that they can speak to someone about concerns. * Pupils have a designated person or mentor to talk to. |  |  |
| Staff are aware of pupils’ sensory needs   * Staff are familiar with an individual’s sensory passport. * Staff monitor pupils who are unable to communicate or recognise their own sensory needs and take appropriate action. |  |  |
| Dinner halls and queuing systems do not cause distress (due to the noise levels, smells and crowds).   * Pupils are allowed to enter the dinner hall before or after peers to avoid queuing and crowds. * An adult or buddy may escort a pupil to and within the dinner hall |  |  |
| Pupils are relaxed when moving through corridors. (Pupils can become anxious in busy corridors due to noise, dislike of crowds and worry about being touched).   * Pupils are allowed to leave the classroom slightly earlier or later than peers to avoid noisy corridors/crowds. |  |  |
| Classroom organisation takes into account the individual needs of pupils.   * Classroom organisation and individual seating plan takes into consideration individual sensory concerns (e.g. A pupil with a fascination with light reflection does not sit by the window). * Pupils who become anxious by the close proximity of others are allowed ample space around their seat |  |  |
| A system of support is available for pupils experiencing sensory overload.   * Learning breaks are allowed when necessary * There is a designated place and a clear system/routine for pupils to follow if they feel they need to withdraw due to sensory overload to ‘chill out.’ |  |  |

**Classroom Checklist**

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| **General Classroom Appearance** |  |
| Are the furniture tops clear? |  |
| Are cupboard doors closed? |  |
| Are the blinds closed when the sun shines in? |  |
| Are all cupboards and boxes labelled? |  |
| Are all resources stored in cupboards or lidded boxes? |  |

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| **Organisation of room** |  |
| Is there a clear area for group work? |  |
| Is there a clear snack area (or a strategy which indicates change of use)? |  |
| Are children’s work areas clearly organised with resources clearly labelled so children can access the materials they need? |  |
| Are materials/stationary in a good state of repair? |  |

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| **Computer** |  |
| Are wires hidden? |  |
| Are stop/closed signs in places for when the computer is not in use? |  |
| Is the computer area clean and tidy? |  |

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| **Sound** |  |
| Are windows closed if people are outside? |  |
| Do chairs have stoppers to minimise noise? |  |

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| **Staff** |  |
| Do staff consider clothing choices (remembering bright and highly patterned clothing may not be conducive to learning) |  |
| Are accessories kept to a minimum? |  |
| Do staff avoid wearing strong perfume or hair products? |  |
| Do staff support understanding using symbols? |  |
| Do staff use minimal language where appropriate? |  |
| Are staff conversations kept to essential information only in the presence of children? |  |