



*'Individual Growth, Individual People'*

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# Sensory Policy

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## **SENSORY POLICY**

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## 1. AIMS

- Every student attending the Newark Orchard School has the right to expect that they will be given every opportunity to develop new skills in all subjects in the National Curriculum.
- Each student will be given a broad and balanced range of experiences which will seek to encourage progress and development for the individual.
- The sensory environment will seek to support the class practices and individual programmes which each teacher is expected to complete termly.
- The main aim of the staff working in the sensory room will be to promote progress (progress is recorded using the Engagement Profile, Wilson Stuart P Step targets or EYFS targets) by using the sensory environment as a stimulator and facilitative environment. It is the aim of this programme to enable those students who have the most complex learning difficulties access to their entitlement. All access will reflect a genuine commitment to valuing the individual for themselves, respecting their age and special needs, and offering the entitlement to make educational progress along a forward and creative continuum.
- The use of the sensory environment will seek to promote the student's progress by concentrating on different routes and methods than those traditionally used in the classroom; it will continue on from the student's latest attainment level, expanding and making progress towards achieving the next target.
- The sensory environment will seek to encourage the student to become self-motivated and self-directed overcoming any obstacle that an individual disability may present to the student.
- The sensory environment will exploit the unique attributes of each stimulator (object or person) seeking to provide the student with opportunities which may be difficult to copy in the busy classroom.
- The sensory environment will seek to develop the student's communication skills thus seeking to enable :-
  - responses to stimuli according to individual need;
  - prompt actions and reactions from their staff assignment;
  - make choices and thereby influence their environment;
  - indicate their wants and needs.
  - enhance and develop skills using a variety of sensory methods.
- Staff working in the sensory environment will have access and support from other professionals, for example, Occupational Therapist (OT) Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT), teacher for children with visual impairments and hearing impairments. These professionals are able to give specialist advice and support around the best and most effective ways to work with individual pupils. For example:
  - Where to position activities
  - Types of activities
  - Which sounds and tastes to work with
  - From which side to work with a pupil
  - Activities to encourage and assess vision and hearing
  - Sensory diet activities
- Sensory learning experiences will also takes place outside of the sensory room in other specific environments, for example:
  - In the sensory garden - a garden designed to give a variety of sensory stimuli through each of the senses.

In the hydrotherapy pool - an environment where the students are accessing their physiotherapy in the warm water and also experiencing sight and sound stimuli.

- The worker in the sensory room environment will have access to specific training and work on promoting links with other professionals to enhance their own skills.

## **2 FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS**

These will be encouraged at all times to extend the students sensory dictionary, these will concentrate on expanding the students' ability to choose to:-

- Look, listen, and attend.
- Communicate preference (enabling students control over their environment to influence choice).
- Signal feelings (let others know how to alter their behaviour to take account of the students).
- Communicate (Relate looking, listening and attending to preference and signalling feelings).
- Play and have fun (enabling the student to interact with others and demonstrate control)
- Link movement to activity/choice/experience.
- Explore the environment around them (help the student to move into the school's world from theirs).

and move on to the development of:-

- Choice and determination (effect changes)
- Spatial awareness (exploring & expanding personal boundaries).
- Language (in a form which can be interpreted and acted upon)
- Logic and likelihood (make, predict and construct changes).

## **3 ASSESSMENT**

The student is assessed by their response when stimulated by various materials. A full range of materials are used to encourage a response from each student. Each student's responses will be different, and can be seen to motivate both staff or student to continue, (with or without coactive support) repeat or communicate, they may include:-

### **VOCAL RESPONSES -**

Vocal responses which indicate pleasure or displeasure; some students response may be merely sounds that we identify and associate as pleasure or not but some students verbally tell staff using words to indicate what they like and do not like.

### **FACIAL EXPRESSIONS -**

Students will indicate their feelings towards a different stimulus for example by smiling, grimacing, semi closure of eyes, frowning, laughing, crying etc.

### **PHYSICAL EXPRESSIONS -**

Students will indicate their feelings towards differing stimulus by, for example, the arching of their back, pushing away, lifting of arms and waving, pulling away individual body parts.

#### **DEGREE OF RESPONSIBILITY -**

Students will take more and more control over their actions as they become familiar with the activity and have the opportunity to be coactively supported through new and sometimes familiar activities.

#### **ENJOYMENT OR ENGAGEMENT WITH TASK -**

Students' level of emotional enjoyment will be noted to help set up an interest base and preferences to be indicated.

#### **PERFORMANCE -**

Students' individual progress regarding skill and task acquisition will be encouraged and recorded.

Making choices about what is liked and not liked provides the student with the opportunity to be respected and have a sense of self worth. Using the sensory environment enables the student to have focused provision in an environment which provides little or no distraction, giving the student the opportunity to work in a relaxed, conducive and appropriate atmosphere. The sensory environment enables staff to use of all experiences to enable an environment and personal programme which respects and notes the choices made by the individual. Small groups work together in a different environment than that of the classroom which provides for cooperative activity. Students interact with a specified adult and receive experiences which encourage a feeling of self worth and achievement. Clear and precise observation of the students responses enable two way communication to take place and promote student autonomy and control in an expanding personal world.

The student then has a sensory programme planned which will provide different and creative ways of enabling achievement to take place. This programme will be based a predetermined topic which will promote particular curriculum areas. Evidence of long medium and short term planning will be accounted.

#### **4 SENSORY COMMUNICATION**

Sensory clues are given to activities, people, rooms, and days of the week to give reference to the student. For example, the SaLT team along with school staff have devised a list of objects that, used alongside spoken word and Makaton symbols, will give the student an indication as to the next activity

Smell on its own is a very powerful locator; as a means of recognising a place or even a day. In the classrooms a specific smell is used to identify each day of the week:-

Monday	= lemon
Tuesday	= rose
Wednesday	= mint
Thursday	= cinnamon
Friday	= lavender

The sensory room is identified by a separate smell of mandarin oil. All smells are applied to cotton wool balls and kept in a box or bag being used for seconds at a time or diluted

in water and sprayed into the air. The use of an infuser is only used on occasion during massage sessions. All massage creams have mandarin oil added if they are used in the sensory room. Staff are encouraged to avoid strong perfumes which may detract from the smell of the day.

The smells have been researched so as not to cause any adverse reactions to the students or staff.

## **5 SENSORY DIETS**

Sensory diets for students with a diagnosis of an Autistic Spectrum Disorder have been introduced into school during the year 2012.

The students are assessed for their sensory needs by an occupational therapist. She works very closely with the class team and the parents/carers to establish the student's patterns of behaviour and then produces a report containing a programme for the class team to follow.

The programmes contain examples of the following interventions:

- Weighted blankets for use on laps during lessons.
- Sitting on a wobble cushion during lessons.
- Rolling on or under a peanut role between breaks in education.
- Twiddle toys.
- Sensory circuits - star jumps, reaching, bending and stretching.
- Ear defenders.
- Chewy tubes.

Any equipment that is recommended for use with students is trialled and then purchased, according to its success, for individual students. See Appendix 1 for equipment samples.

## Equipment Examples



Peanut roll



Wobble Cushion



Chewy Tube



Fiddle Toy



Weighted Lap Blanket