



# Cognus

No Limits on Learning

## Training for Autism Leads in Schools

Environment and Sensory differences and impact on learning

Creating 'Autism Friendly' settings


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MA (SEND and Inclusive Education)

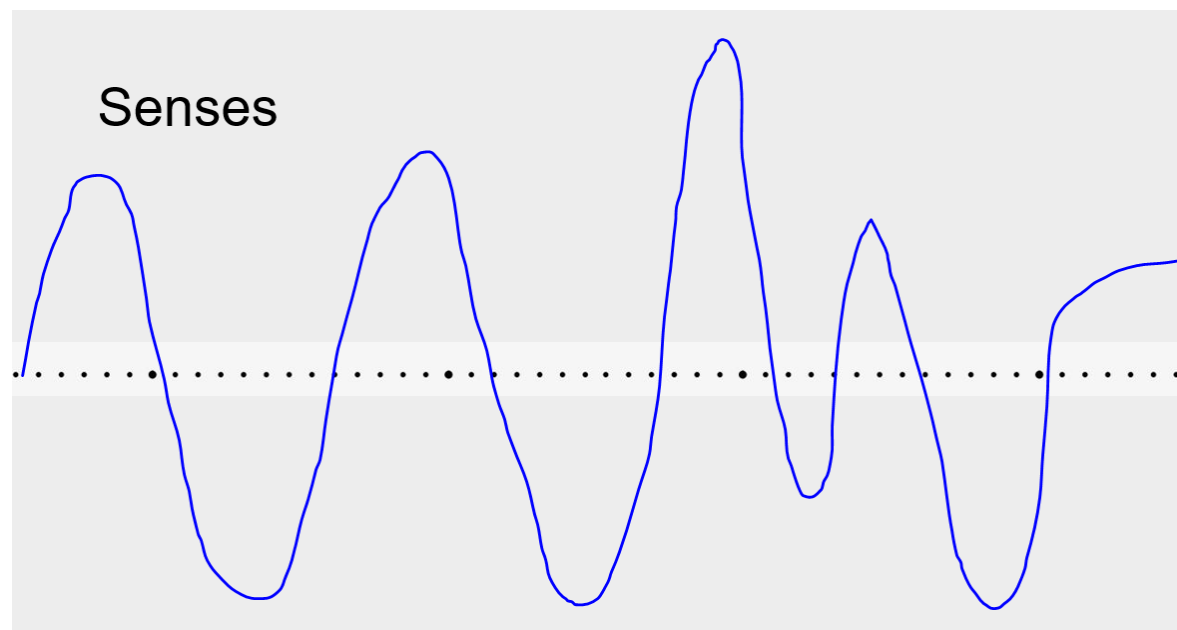
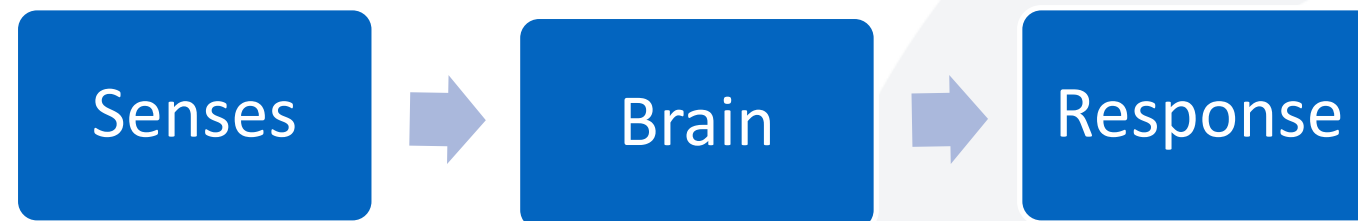
PGCE, BA (Criminology and Social Policy)

# Today's session

- What do we mean by sensory differences?
  - Impact on learning
  - Creating an 'autism-friendly' setting
  - Supporting sensory differences
  - Primary and Secondary Resources
- 

# Sensory

Information from our senses travels into our brain, where it is processed for meaning; this processing can work differently for autistic people.



You can be over- or under-sensitive with any of these senses, and this can change for different stimuli, or even at different times of the day.

It can also change depending on how you are feeling – if you are feeling anxious, your senses might be heightened.

# Seeing the world with sensory overload

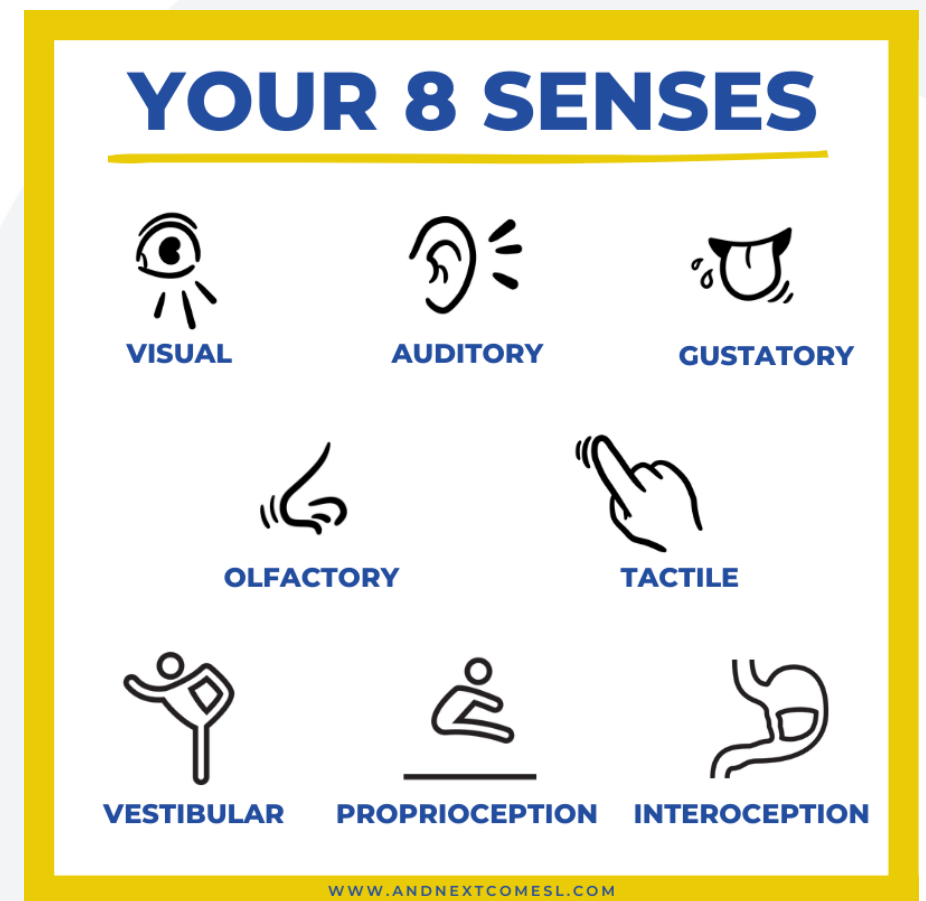
[AWWA - The World Through My Eyes \(Autism\) \(youtube.com\)](#)

[Can you make it to the end? – YouTube](#)

[Autism TMI Virtual Reality Experience \(youtube.com\)](#)

[Sensory Overload \(Interacting with Autism Project\) on Vimeo](#)

[Autism: Sensory Overload Simulation \(youtube.com\)](#)



# Sensory differences

“The classroom is each teacher’s mini-kingdom and the ‘home’ of your pupils for most of the school day. Teachers lavish care and attention on how it is set out and how they decorate it and spend time organising furniture and equipment that they and their pupils will need to access throughout the year. In primary classrooms, hours are spent printing and laminating and setting out displays, and carefully choosing words, pictures and prompts for pupils’ writing, maths and topic work. Coat pegs and drawers are labelled, boxes and books are given out and groups of tables are given a name. In the Early Years, parts of the room are often sectioned off into creative, ‘small world’ or sensory play areas and most classrooms have a common focus area, usually in front of the whiteboard, where pupils will gather to listen to the teacher presenting a lesson. At the beginning of the school year, the classroom is bright, stimulating, labelled, and ready for a new intake of pupils.”

“Now imagine you are in a busy foreign railway station. You know you have to get somewhere but you’re not quite sure how to read the strange symbols that indicate the destination on your ticket. The signs are in a script that you don’t recognise, the trains are loud, noisy and smell strongly of diesel. The buzzing crowd is pushing and jostling you in a direction you’re not even sure you want to go. Some people come towards you making attempts to grab your bag, and you feel scared and threatened. Other people gesticulate with signs and mouth strange words, but you don’t understand and they soon go away. You spot what looks like an official and make your way to them, but they are just shouting random words in a language you don’t understand through a megaphone. Your head hurts, you are sick with anxiety and frustration and you have no idea how to cope. School can feel like this for pupils with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC).”

# Sensory differences

- Feelings may be more or less intense
- Response to stimuli can be more or less intense
- Response may look like challenging behaviour (but they are not meant to be – they are a response to stimuli)
- The pupil's ability to focus and learn can be compromised due to their sensory differences
- Without understanding sensory differences, we are not enabling our autistic students
- With understanding, we can create autism-friendly environments and support sensory needs.

# Recognising Sensory differences

- Everyone is individual and how they respond to stimuli can look different
- Individuals may sensory seek, avoid or both
- At times individuals may seek stimuli that they normally avoid
- Other times they may sometimes avoid stimuli that they normally seek
- Some individuals may mask their sensitivities

"[So-called] Mild autism doesn't mean one experiences autism mildly... It means YOU experience their autism mildly. You may not know how hard they've had to work to get to the level they are."

-Adam Walton-



# Visual: What might it look like?

- Limited eye contact
- Focusing on small objects in the room
- Flicking fingers in front of eyes
- Squinting or looking out of the corner of the eyes
- Seems sensitive to changes in light
- Lining up objects
- Turning on and off lights
- Sprinkling or decanting
- Difficulty matching or sorting
- Likes dropping or throwing objects over and over



VISUAL



# Auditory: What it might look like?

- Puts hands over ears to block out sounds
- Puts ear close to noise to listen
- Enjoys sounds over and over
- Shows no response to noises or speech
- Hums or sings to screen out noises
- Becomes upset by loud or sudden noises



**AUDITORY**

# Tactile: What it might look like?

- Likes firm massage/squeezing/hugs
- Strips of clothing/likes labels cut out
- Finds dressing very stressful
- Avoids bare feet/refuses to wear shoes and socks
- Mouths objects
- Dislikes holding hand or an adult guiding to object
- Over reaction to light touch
- Dislikes getting messy
- Dislikes hair cuts



**TACTILE**

# Taste/Smell: What it might look like?

- May have strong preferences or dislikes of particular tastes and smells
- Sniffing objects/food/people
- Hold nose/ gags
- Fussy eater
- It may be difficult to introduce new taste experiences or deviate from the 'tried and tested'
- May be an underlying issue for refusals



**OLFACTORY**



**GUSTATORY**

# Vestibular (balance): What it might look like?

- May rock back and forth
- Leaning to side
- Spinning- can be indulged in without getting dizzy
- Seeking out experiences that challenge the centre of gravity and balance
- Difficulty changing the direction of movement when running,
- Difficulty maintaining speed
- Trouble walking and balancing
- Craving 'risky' sensations – balancing on thin supports or climbing to the top of precarious heights



**VESTIBULAR**

# Proprioception (body awareness): What might it look like?

- Need to touch everything
- Leaning on surfaces, other people
- Laying on the floor
- Craving close contact i.e. wanting hugs
- Sensitive to touch
- Take clothes off
- Walk on tip toes
- “Not knowing their own strength”

Proprioception: body awareness (messages about where your body is in time and space)



**PROPRIOCEPTION**

# Interoception (internal body messages ): What might it look like?

- Always hungry or never hungry
- Difficulty regulating body temperature
- Feelings of nausea
- Need for the bathroom or not knowing when to go until it is very urgent!
- Differences feeling the physical sensations of emotions



**INTEROCEPTION**

Interoception: internal body messages (how you are feeling, if you are hungry, have a tummy ache, need the toilet etc.)

# The challenges of the classroom

Sensory processing challenges may result in the **inattention and distraction** of autistic children.

Reasons include:

- Children who are hypersensitive to auditory stimuli may be distracted by background noises, affecting their ability to listen to important instructions.
- Children may be distracted because they focus on the clothing that they are wearing.
- Children may seek proprioceptive and vestibular input by rocking, spinning, or flapping their hands to calm themselves down.
- Children with high activity levels and who enjoy seeking movement may fidget excessively in their seats or disrupt lessons when they are supposed to sit still.

Often, these children get misunderstood as displaying inappropriate behaviours, but they are seeking sensory input or being over-responsive to them. The inattention and distraction caused by sensory processing challenges that autistic children face can, thus, potentially affect their learning and their school life.



# The challenges of the classroom

Children with sensory processing challenges may feel easily **distressed and anxious** in school or classroom settings. A child may get stressed out and feel anxious for several reasons:

- A child may get stressed out and feel angry when the class is too loud and noisy. Upon experiencing loud noises, they may cover their ears, become very upset and cry.
- When near people such as during situations like group work or along the corridors, children may experience distress and discomfort as some children hate being touched by other people.

Distressing and anxiety-provoking situations that overstimulate children can also reduce their ability to pay attention in class, thus disrupting their learning.

There is **limited classroom participation** as children with sensory processing challenges get easily overwhelmed being in classrooms or schools. They may leave the classroom or avoid school altogether, thus affecting their learning adversely.

# The challenges of the classroom - Senses and impact on learning

Effective learning occurs only when the senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste are stimulated. Using the five senses simultaneously in processing the information helps us to learn. The theory also suggests that there is a greater chance for learning to happen if multi-senses are stimulated. Therefore, it is crucial to adapt the sources and methodologies used in teaching according to the sensory system.

“Sensory Theory” by Laird (1985)

Sensory learning can be particularly important in supporting children with SEND with their learning. Understanding the importance of the senses and how they impact individuals differently can also help you to improve your pupils' engagement, wellbeing and behaviour.

[Sensational Senses, Part 1: Why Sensory Engagement Matters for Everyone. \(twinkl.co.uk\)](https://www.twinkl.co.uk)

# How can we help?

Young autistic people who often experience sensory processing challenges may be inattentive and distracted, feel distressed and anxious, and have limited classroom participation. This affects learning opportunities. Given that sensory processing challenges are noticeable only in certain contexts, it is necessary to identify the specific factors in the environment that affect children's learning and school life, in addition to considering interventions, to minimise the effects of it on their learning and school life.

# Simple Classroom Adaptations

- Clutter-free, organised classrooms and corridors with reduced visual and auditory stimulation
- Wood, hessian and pastel colours rather than bright, colours
- Separate zones for learning and relaxation or play
- Quiet spaces within classes and the wider school with reduced noise and lighting where an autistic person and their companions could retreat to if an environment becomes too much – (soft seating and sensory toys: fidgets, stress balls and ear defenders, sunglasses, weighted blanket, music.
- Encourage young people to recognise their sensory differences and seek/ be supported to seek strategies to help with dysregulation.





# Creating 'Autism Friendly' settings - Audit your environment!

South West Yorkshire Partnership   
NHS Foundation Trust

## Checklist for Autism-Friendly Environments (2016)

Stephen Simpson  
RNLD, BPhil (Autism)

NICE Endorsement statement for resource producer -E0063

This checklist supports the recommendations on the physical environment in the NICE guidelines on [Autism spectrum disorder in adults](#) and [Autism spectrum disorder in under 19s](#).

[Microsoft Word - Checklist for Autism-Friendly Environments - September 2016.docx \(positiveaboutautism.co.uk\)](#)

 **national autism standards**

## Sensory Audit for Schools and Classrooms

[Sensory Audit for Schools and Classrooms \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

[AET Schools Competency Framework \(autismeducationtrust.org.uk\)](#)

[AET Schools Standards Framework \(autismeducationtrust.org.uk\)](#)

[GAP-report-mainReport\\_I-S.pdf \(autismeducationtrust.org.uk\)](#)



## Autism-friendly checklists

Use these lists to see how autism-friendly your organisation or company is and which areas you need to work on.

[NAS Autism-friendly Checklists \(dy55nndrxke1w.cloudfront.net\)](#)

Supported by:  
Department for  
**Education**



### Enabling Environments

#### Principle Five: Leadership and management that promotes and embeds good autism practice.

STANDARDS

**S9.** We promote a supportive environment where leaders and managers are knowledgeable about autism and cascade information to their staff. We encourage our staff to reflect upon, discuss, and evaluate their practice.

**S10.** We develop mutual understanding, communication, and support between autistic pupils and staff, between autistic pupils and their peers, and between parents/carers and staff. We address the risk of social exclusion for autistic pupils.

COMPETENCIES

**C9.** I create enabling environments based on what I know of the individual pupil and through making reasonable adjustments accordingly.

**C10.** I create positive, supportive, and caring relationships, between autistic pupils and staff, between autistic pupils and their peers, and between staff and parents/carers. I work hard to address barriers to learning. This includes reducing the risk of social exclusion.

#### Principle Six: An ethos and environment that fosters social inclusion for autistic pupils.

STANDARDS

**S11.** Our enabling approaches foster a calm low-arousal learning environment and we promote a sense of wellbeing, security, and belonging for all our pupils.

**S12.** Our learning environments are structured, understandable, and predictable. We adapt learning environments to enable pupils to participate fully in learning.

COMPETENCIES

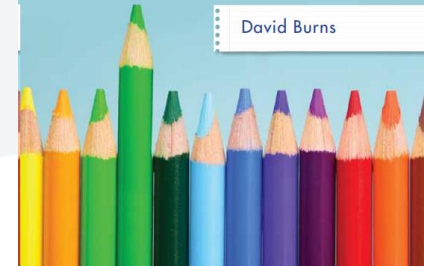
**C11.** I understand the importance of focusing on identifying and addressing barriers to learning in the three areas of difference, namely social understanding and communication; flexibility, information processing, and understanding; and sensory processing and integration.

**C12.** I provide a clearly organised classroom and an environment that takes into account the needs of autistic pupils.

# Creating 'Autism Friendly' settings

How to create  
autism friendly  
classrooms  
using strategies  
that help all pupils

David Burns







[Autism friendly classrooms - primary school edition.pdf \(westsussex-local-offer.s3.amazonaws.com\)](https://westsussex-local-offer.s3.amazonaws.com/autism-friendly-classrooms-primary-school-edition.pdf)

[Autism friendly classrooms - secondary school edition.pdf \(westsussex-local-offer.s3.amazonaws.com\)](https://westsussex-local-offer.s3.amazonaws.com/autism-friendly-classrooms-secondary-school-edition.pdf)

Further reading:

[How to Be a Sensory-Friendly Teacher - Sensory Friendly Solutions](#)

## How to Be a Sensory-Friendly Teacher

Create a sensory-learning environment.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visual schedule</li><li>• Timer</li><li>• Natural light</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Standing desks</li><li>• Wedges for chairs</li></ul>
Provide students with coping strategies.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stuffy buddies</li><li>• Weighted cushions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Noise-cancelling headphones</li></ul>
Open and honest communication.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Talking circles</li><li>• Using visuals</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Watching physical cues</li><li>• Scheduling breaks</li></ul>
Flexibility in teaching.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give student's choices in their days</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creating personalized learning plans</li></ul>



### 10 Reasonable Adjustments for the Classroom

Small changes to the environment can have a BIG impact on autistic pupils.

The Equality Act 2010 states that all schools must make 'reasonable adjustments' for autistic pupils that require them.

For example, autistic pupils may have different sensory experiences and small adjustments to the environment can reduce anxiety and improve their focus on learning tasks. You can take positive steps to ensure you're meeting the needs of autistic pupils by making minor changes to the classroom environment.

The Autism Education Trust has created a checklist to help you to start thinking about these 'reasonable adjustments':

1. Are your surfaces clear and cupboards closed?
2. Do you close the blind when the room is bright?
3. Do you close the window when there's noises outside?
4. Can you put stoppers on chair legs to minimise noise?
5. Are resources/boxes/drawers and cupboards clearly labelled?
6. Could your displays be less busy and less distracting?
7. Do you have a designated area for registration/group work/snack time?
8. Do you dress in clothes without bright colours or busy patterns?
9. Do you refer to visual timetables throughout the day?
10. Is there a quiet area either nearby or within the classroom where pupils can take breaks?



Are there other areas where you can make further adjustments to support autistic pupils?

# Creating 'Autism Friendly' settings

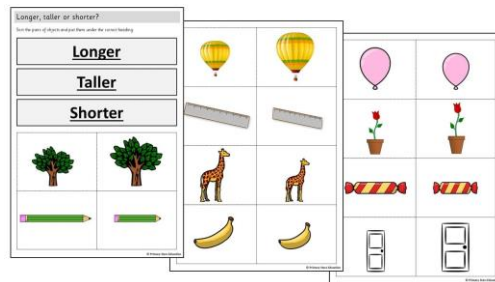
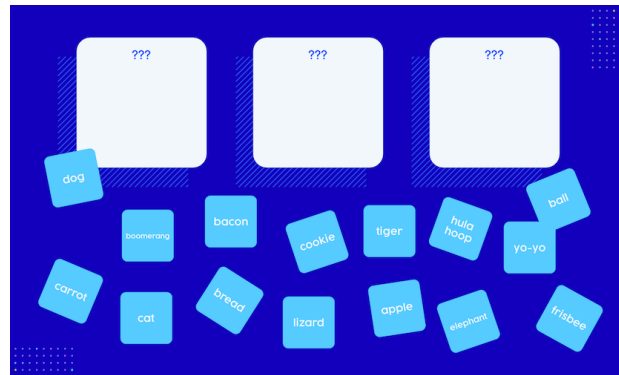
Cognus Autism-Friendly School Audit – see brochure for costs

- Curriculum
- Lesson planning
- Social communication
- Classrooms
- Assessment
- Staff training
- Working with others
- Parental views
- Pupil voice
- Social and emotional well-being
- Unstructured times
- Sensory
- Rewards and sanctions





# Accessibility of lessons through resourcing



## Have I got it?

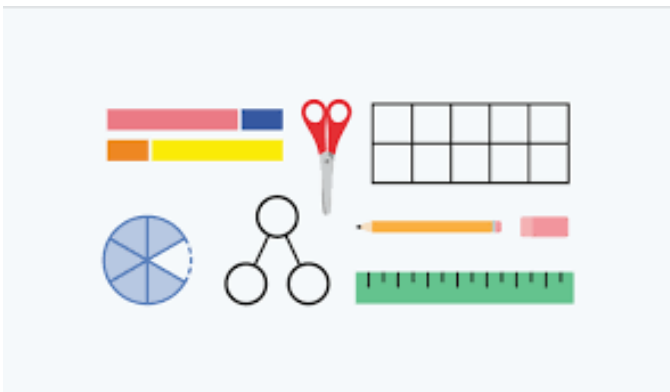
Writing

Success Criteria	I DID it!	I need to work on it.
<b>A</b> Used capitals correctly.		
<b>STOP</b> . ! ? Used sentence stoppers.		
Used meatball and spaghetti spaces.		
<b>My Pocket Wordwall</b> Word Wall and dictionary spelling.		
Used POWERFUL Words		

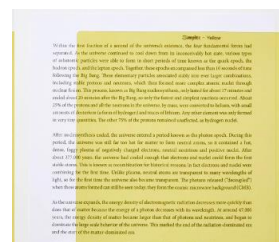
Star \_\_\_\_\_

Target \_\_\_\_\_

~~cool~~ ~~fun~~ ~~stuff~~ ~~good~~ ~~nice~~



and and and



## Fact File

<p><b>Full Name:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Date of Birth:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Place of Birth:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Famous for:</b> _____</p>	<p><b>Who were they?</b> _____</p> <p><b>Their life:</b> _____</p>
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Life Science

## Parts of a Plant

Directions: Cut out the word cards below. Glue them in the correct places so the parts of the plant are labeled.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

Scissors icon

roots      leaf      stem

flower      seed



# Normalise and model regulatory activities



Chair press ups



Fidget tool



Wall pushes



Hand squeeze



Wobble cushion



Crab walks



Breathing exercises



Weighted lap pad



Jumping jacks



Mantra



Ear defenders



Run round the playground

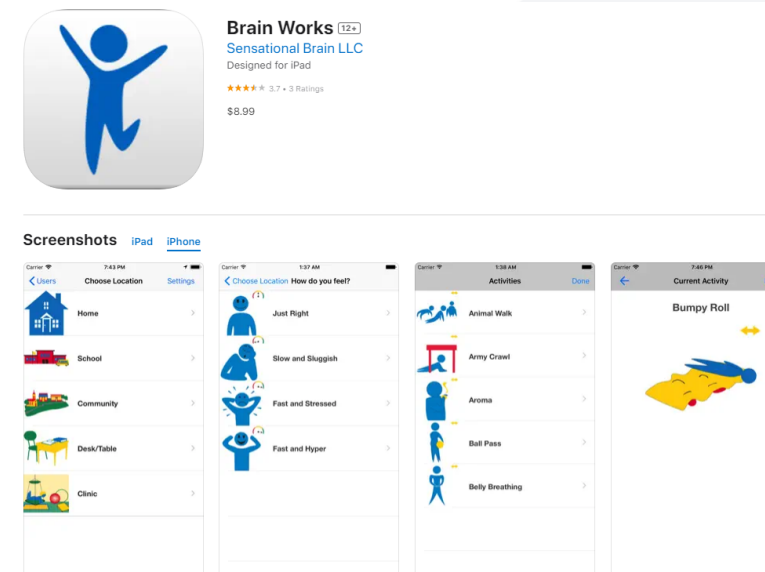


# General Strategies –seek OT guidance for personalised plans

## Tactile Sensitivity

Consider the following:

- Ensure the child or young person is seated near the back and side of the class, so he can see others moving towards him.
- Delineate the area the child is to sit on during 'Circle Time' or floor work by using a carpet tile (even better give each child their own tile so as not to make the one child different). In secondary, give the young person their own space within the class.
- Ensure others are not sitting too close.
- Ensure the child is either at the front or the back of the line for coming in/out class.
- Allow the child to be door monitor, so they can hold the door open and all others can pass through ahead of them.
- Arrange for the child or young person to be allowed into the dinner hall ahead of their peers so that they can get sorted and seated before the rush starts.
- Forewarn the child before you touch him, by saying his name first and moving through his visual field to reach him.
- Do not force the child to participate in messy play e.g. finger painting etc. but allow him alternatives such as using a paintbrush.
- Allow the pupil to wear gloves so their skin does not have direct contact with the aversive texture.
- Recognise they may need a towel on chair/carpet because the texture of the chair/carpet is too distracting.
- Increase tolerance to textures by small, frequent exposures e.g. glue, finger paints, shaving cream etc. initially using a plastic glove finger or plastic wallet. If the pupil refuses to touch, then use a spoon, straw or cover one finger with a plastic glove.
- Arrange classroom to minimise accidental jostling and bumping by classmates.
- Always approach from the front.
- Remember a hug may be painful rather than comforting.
- Gradually introduce different textures- have a box of materials available.
- Allow pupils to complete activities such as hair brushing themselves, enabling them to regulate their sensitivity.
- Play with shaving cream (unscented), hand lotion or damp sand in trays.
- Use cooked spaghetti to make shapes.
- Make lazy 8s (Brain Gym) in the sand, play with toy cars, small world figures etc.
- Play dough
- 'Theraputty'- hide toys inside it, squeeze and manipulate.
- Make hand and footprints in cornflour sprinkled over a dark mat.
- Cutting and sticking activities- collage etc.
- Create an obstacle course of different textures e.g. a towel, carpet square, bubble wrap and allow the pupil to walk across them.
- Therabands — use to pull and stretch.



[NEW\\_Sensory\\_Toolkit.pdf \(westsussex-local-offer.s3.amazonaws.com\)](https://westsussex-local-offer.s3.amazonaws.com/NEW_Sensory_Toolkit.pdf)



# Individual sensory profiles

**A Tactile sensitivity/defensiveness:**  
 Child or young person may be uncomfortable with light touch and can become upset / aggressive or experience a meltdown if touched unexpectedly.

Item	Over (hyper) sensitive to touch	1	2	3	4	5
1	Experiences anxiety and meltdowns during grooming e.g. cutting finger nails and hair cuts.					
2	Wears inappropriate clothes for the weather e.g. long sleeves in hot weather					
3	Avoids going barefoot, especially in sand or grass.					
4	Reacts emotionally or aggressively to touch.					
5	Avoids unpredictable tactile experiences e.g. splashing water or messy activities.					
6	Has difficulty lining up for assembly and after playtimes etc. Dislikes being close to peers.					
7	Seems overly sensitive to touch-will complain they are hurt after the slightest knock.					
Any comments to add:		Score /35				

## Sensory Profile

**Auditory Filtering and Sensitivity**

**Tactile Sensitivity**

**Taste/Smell**

**Sensory Seeking**

**Visual Sensitivity**

**Low energy/ poor proprioception**

**Other sensory needs:**

[NEW\\_Sensory\\_Toolkit.pdf \(westsussex-local-offer.s3.amazonaws.com\)](https://westsussex-local-offer.s3.amazonaws.com/NEW_Sensory_Toolkit.pdf)

# Sensory Diets

## Sensory Diet

A. The **Sensory main meal** is a main activity that helps the child **regulate** their sensory systems so that they feel calm and alert enough to engage with the rest of the school day demands.

Examples:

- a break somewhere quiet
- a walk around the school grounds
- physical activities such as a sensory circuit
- time wearing a weighted jacket

This may mean that a teaching assistant takes the child out of class for anything between 5 minutes and 1/2 hour whilst the activity takes place. The aim is for the child to have the sensory input or sensory break their system needs so that they have the energy, focus and calmness to continue with the demands of the day.

B. **Sensory snacks** can happen through the day and should be available for the child to use at any time.

Examples:

- headphones to shut out noise overload
- fiddle toys
- knobbly cushions on their chair
- “Chewelry” and oral motor toys
- calming smells
- weighted cushions

# Successful implementation

The aim of all sensory diets is to help the young person learn to “self-regulate”. They should be taught about their sensory systems and how the environment and maybe other people (noise, touch etc) upset their sensory systems, and that it isn't their fault.

When choosing what activities to put in place then look at the list you have been given in the report. **Speak to parents and the young person to gather which activities might already be familiar and working well** with the young person. Then **choose one or two at a time and experiment to see what helps the young person and what doesn't**. If it doesn't, cross it off the list and use another of the ideas. Involve the young person and get them to say what they'd like to try (give visual choice boards if needed) and have the child comment on whether the activity makes them feel okay, better, and able to join in class learning activities. Try and **record what works** and what response the child gives so you have evidence for any follow up or review.

If you timetable the 'main meals' into the young person visual timetable then the child knows it is happening and can build that into their expectations of the day. Some young people can wait more patiently because they know when the activity is coming. **They also need to know that it's okay to have their 'snack' activities WHENEVER they need them.** If a young person is struggling with noise, then telling them to wait for their headphones isn't going to help them. They will need to know it is okay to use them whenever they need them. Don't be worried that some young person might use these activities to 'opt out' regularly. **If the sensory diet is doing its job, then they will feel calmer more often and naturally will join in learning activities.** At first, it is usual that children use their 'snack' activities often. That is good.



# Cognus Therapies



## Who are we?

The Occupational Therapy Service consists of Occupational Therapists (OTs) and Senior Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTAs).

We provide Occupational Therapy support to mainstream and specialist schools and bases, aged 3 to 25 in Primary, Secondary and Post-16 provisions.

As a team, we support children/young people's ability to learn and engage with their education by assessing and understanding their physical, sensory, and emotional and behavioural needs and work in close partnership with schools and parents.



## Cognus Therapies

### Cognus Occupational Therapy Service (COTS)



## How can children and young people be referred?

Children and young people can be referred to the Occupational Therapy team by the school's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCo), by their parents / carers, and by the Local Authority (as part of the EHCNA process) if there are concerns about their skills (e.g., gross, fine, sensory) and how that might be impacting upon their ability to access their education.

# Cognus Therapies – Cognus

Click on the link and you can download the Cognus Graduated Response for Education and Therapy Support document – suitable for all children not just for pupils with a diagnosis of autism.

For additional support – see their traded offer.

## What do we do?

We support the child/young person's ability to learn and engage with their education by assessing and understanding their physical and sensory needs and work in close partnership with education settings, parents and carers.

We deliver interventions and support the child/young person's access learning, develop independence with functional tasks and learn skills in preparation for adulthood. For example, participation and engagement in lessons, attention, documenting learning, managing belongings, changing for PE, lunchtime and self-care tasks, being a part of and contributing to local communities.

We complete assessments and reports in line with the EHCP annual review cycle and collaborate with a range of professionals. We can provide environmental adaptations to access education and advise on making adjustments to the sensory and physical aspects of the classroom and education environment.

We provide whole school, small group and 1:1 training and coaching to education settings to support the child/young person within the context of the classroom and to enable staff to support the child/young person in working towards their occupational therapy outcomes. We also provide training on specific interventions to support carry over of therapy into the classroom, to help embed new skills.

You can access a range of resources to support children and young people from the Graduated Response for Education Based Therapeutic Support, available from the Cognus Website.



## How can you contact us?

If you would like to speak to a member of the COTS or find out more, you can contact us on:

Telephone  
020 8323 0450

Email  
cognus.therapies@cognus.org.uk

Website  
www.cognus.org.uk

Twitter  
@CognusTherapies

Address  
Cantium House  
Railway Approach  
Wallington  
SM6 0DZ

Ref	Title	Description	Unit	Unit Price until 31/3/2024
TH001	Assessment options for Occupational Therapy (OT)	Option 1: Observation report and recommendations	2 hours	£160
		Option 2: Assessment and short report with recommendations	6 hours	£480
		Option 3: Assessment and report with outcomes.	8 hours	£640
TH002	Assessment options for Speech & Language (SaLT)	Option 1: Observation report and recommendations	2 hours	£160
		Option 2: Assessment and short report with recommendations	4 hours	£320
		Option 3: Assessment and report with outcomes.	6 hours	£480
TH003	Cognus Therapies Silver Package	18 hours of support can be used for both OT and SaLT (assessments, therapy and training).	Per package	£1,413
TH004	Cognus Therapies Gold Package	30 hours of support can be used for both OT and SaLT (assessments, therapy and training).	Per package	£2,197.50
TH005	Cognus Therapies bespoke package	Bespoke packages of support (therapy provision and training).	Per hour	£83.75
TH006	Examination Access Arrangement Testing	A full assessment of need including a report with recommendations.	Per assessment	£180





# Beyond the physical environment...

	<p>Escape/leave questions</p> <p>This is particularly important when there is an unfriendly environment that is difficult to change. People on the autism spectrum are thought to suffer higher levels of stress than the general population due to the condition. It is important therefore to indicate to someone that they can leave a stressful situation and where they can go that is calmer.</p>	
1	Is there a system to know when a person with autism needs to escape/leave from an environment?	
2	Is there a space / room to escape to?	
3	Is this room /space used solely for this purpose?	
4	Have you considered to what extent is this room/space low stimuli and safe?	
5	Is there an alternative to the escape room/space (E.g. the garden)	

	<p>Communication questions</p> <p>In all walks of life effective communication is vital. For people on the autism spectrum this is perhaps essential. Clear unambiguous indicators in all forms can prevent stress. Like much of the general population there is a definite preference for sameness, for appropriate language and for an absence of sudden change.</p>	
1	Does the environment have clear signs to indicate the use of each room?	
2	If appropriate, are there directional signs to each area?	
3	Have you considered to what extent are communication systems supported by the use of symbols, pictures, photos or objects?	
4	If rooms do not have one purpose only can you indicate when it is used for different functions to avoid confusion?	
5	Are there photographs used to aid recognition of people (Staff/unfamiliar) if needed?	
6	Do you plan for changes e.g. to routines, staff leaving and building work?	
7	Have you considered the use of 'literal' meanings when designing your environment?	

	<p>Flexibility of Thought /Theory of Mind questions</p> <p>The rigidity of thought patterns is part of the autism condition. Some people cannot always generalise and it is important not to presume this to be the case. Sometimes it can seem that a person shows a lack of empathy however it may be because they show a lack of theory of mind and cannot put themselves into 'others shoes'</p>	
1	Are you aware of the absorbing interests of people in the environment and how to facilitate and manage differences?	
2	Are you/staff aware of the concept of Flexibility of Thought?	
3	Have you considered that because there has been a good/bad response in one environment this cannot be generalised to a similar environment?	
4	Have you considered that people with Autism may have difficulty understanding or interpreting others by not being able to empathize and put themselves in to someone else's consciousness?	
5	Have you considered how will this affect your approaches in the environments they live?	
6	Are you aware of the coping mechanisms for individuals in the environment?	

South West Yorkshire Partnership   
NHS Foundation Trust

## Checklist for Autism-Friendly Environments (2016)

Stephen Simpson  
RNLD, BPhil (Autism)

NICE Endorsement statement for resource producer -E0063

This checklist supports the recommendations on the physical environment in the NICE guidelines on [Autism spectrum disorder in adults](#) and [Autism spectrum disorder in under 19s](#).

# Establishing trust and an open dialogue

Set aside time to ensure all pupils know that:

- All feelings are ok!
- Everyone experiences moments of calm, stress, anger, frustration, upset - normalise this through modelling.
- It's ok to feel these ways, it's not ok to be unsafe.
- It can be helpful to identify the triggers and try to manage them – journalling is good for older pupils.
- During the day make sure you balance your emotions – this could be by doing activities that help you to get the sensory input you require to feel alert/relaxed/calm (sensory diet).
- Work on safe ways to express emotions.
- Begin to advocate for your needs and wants.

# Primary

## Environment

1. Have a visual timetable and use it. [Here you can read about why this can help](#) children learn independence.
2. Have clear spaces between display boards and keep displays simple.
3. Leave clear space around whiteboards. Less chance of being distracted.
4. Make sure where child is to sit is accessible for them, without having to navigate obstacles or pass lots of other children closely.
5. Check light levels, noise from other rooms, smells and cut down on things hanging from the ceiling.
6. It's always best to start minimalist and let the child tell you what they can cope with on top of that. As they settle in you can involve the autistic child in what could go on the walls.
7. Use table top vocabulary/maths reminders rather than word or number walls. Then you just get them out as needed and they are not there all the time.
8. Keep clutter on top of cupboards and tables to the minimum.

# Primary

## Welcome

1. Make a booklet reminding the pupil about their new classroom, with a picture of the class staff and an outline of what will happen on the first day back. Send it to the child's home with a welcome note.
2. Read the notes from the last teacher and highlight all the positive things about the child. Have a box of toys, magazines etc of their favourite things ready for them on the first day.
3. Know their sensory profile. If they use headphones, have a storage place for them near their seat. If they have a wobble cushion, make sure it is ready for them on the first day back.
4. Have whatever visuals they used in the last class, ready for them to use again (or a similar set if they need renewing). This is not the time to say they don't need them anymore.

# Primary

## **Inclusion**

1. Make plans to support the child and their peers to be able to interact well with them. This could be by setting up a games group, buddy system for playtimes or supporting partner work in class.
2. Support the children to access classroom routines by having visual supports such as a schedule, or writing a 'story' for them about how things work in your classroom. Pictures and written instructions are easier to refer to and remember than verbal instructions. Make them positive and encouraging.
3. Plan how the autistic child might access class lessons. They may need a whiteboard, visuals, a copy of the story book for themselves, a fiddle toy or a TA supporting them. Spend time with the TA beforehand to plan how this might work.
4. Plan to teach the child yourself. Timetable this in, so that you are their teacher, not the TA. Be a team where you both know the child well.

# Primary

## Parents

1. Find out the first names of the parents.
2. Arrange a date to meet and listen to their story as soon as you are able to in the first couple of weeks. Just listen and get to know what their hopes for their child are. They will have some really helpful tips and information for you to support their child.
3. Suggest a way to keep in touch regularly with them. A home-school diary works well.

# Primary

## **Yourself**





1. Don't feel overwhelmed by what you might not know. Ask for advice/help earlier rather than later.
2. Plan time to plan regularly with your TA.
3. Get to know the professional working with the child and make friends with them. They might do a lot extra for you (we do!)
4. Read about autism by all means but don't assume the child in your class will be just like the children you read about. Get to know them and their strengths as well as understand their frustrations.
5. Be positive and calm in all circumstances. It is a child and behaviour is communication. That can help you 'read' what they are trying to tell you.






# Regulatory activities - Primary

## SENSORY ACTIVITY IDEAS

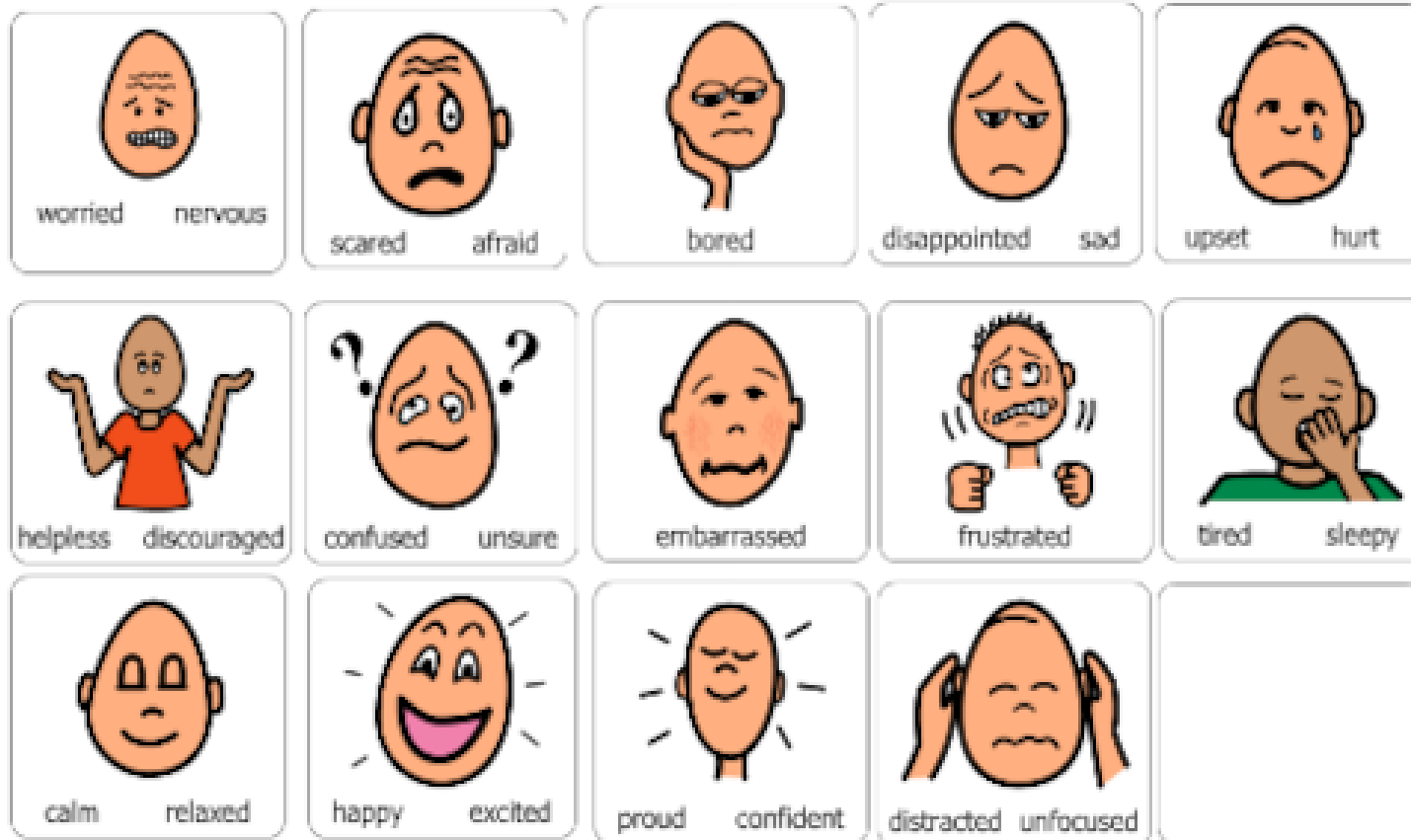


Senses	Hypersensitive (calming activities)	Hyposensitive (alerting activities)
 Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce florescent lighting</li> <li>Sunglasses</li> <li>Workstation/screen divider to block distractions</li> <li>Blackout blinds</li> <li>Work in dim lights</li> <li>Visual material such as glitter wand, water toys</li> <li>Work on pastel coloured paper/whiteboard background</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Light sticks</li> <li>Work in bright lights</li> <li>Use flashlight or pointing stick to pick out important information</li> <li>Brightly coloured paper</li> <li>Use a highlighter to underline text</li> <li>Use coloured chalk</li> <li>Use a slant board to work on</li> </ul>
 Hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ear plugs/ear defenders</li> <li>Food/music with slow, even beat</li> <li>Soft singing or humming</li> <li>Cover ears when loud or unexpected noise</li> <li>Work in quiet environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food/music with varied pitch, sound, loudness or uneven/fast beat</li> <li>Speak with animated high and low voice</li> <li>Use novel sound-producing toys and materials e.g. talking calculator etc.</li> <li>Prepare in advance for loud/strange noises</li> <li>Visual cues to back up verbal information</li> </ul>
 Touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow individuals to complete activities themselves to regulate sensitivity</li> <li>Wear weighted blanket or ankle weights</li> <li>Snuggle under blankets</li> <li>Play with resistive putty</li> <li>Velcro calming materials under table e.g. fur, velvet etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider tight clothing e.g. leotard underneath clothing</li> <li>Weighted blanket</li> <li>Sleeping bag</li> <li>Sand bag on lap</li> <li>Sustain light touch to the palm of the hand</li> <li>Hold something cool</li> <li>Gently and quickly rub the skin</li> <li>Take a cool shower or was face with cool water</li> <li>Receive a light back scratch</li> <li>Have a fiddle toy</li> <li>Stroke a soft toy or pet animals</li> </ul>
 Taste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage child to 'clean out' mouth with water between mouthfuls</li> <li>Suck thick liquids through a straw</li> <li>Drink from sports water bottle</li> <li>Chew/suck on a keychain or necklace (chewllery)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crunchy foods e.g. carrots, celery, apples, pretzels, ice</li> <li>Chewy foods such as liquorice, gum etc.</li> <li>Vibration toys to stimulate senses</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ice lollies to desensitise mouth</li> <li>Small bites</li> <li>Play a musical instrument</li> <li>Blow whistles, bubbles, feathers, balloons, straw and pingpong balls etc.</li> <li>Drink warm liquids</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blow whistles, bubbles, feathers, balloons, straw and pingpong balls etc.</li> <li>Eat ice or ice lollies</li> <li>Keep water bottle with cold water at the desk</li> </ul>
 Smell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unscented detergents or shampoos</li> <li>Refrain from wearing perfume</li> <li>Burn vanilla scented candle/potpourri</li> <li>Incorporate preferred scents within academic tasks</li> <li>Use scented crayons or pens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong smelling objects as rewards and distraction</li> <li>Create a book of scents e.g. match scented cotton wool to picture</li> <li>Use scented lotion or soap between activities</li> <li>Spray citrus room spray before academic activities</li> <li>Use scented materials in projects</li> <li>Use scented stickers</li> </ul>
 Vestibular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Break down activities into small steps</li> <li>Visual cues for finish line or stops in movement activities</li> <li>Jump on trampoline or do jumping jacks</li> <li>Swing on playground equipment</li> <li>Rock in rocking chair</li> <li>Roll back and forth in a barrel</li> <li>Take a break and do an 'errand'</li> <li>Heavy jobs such as carrying books/moving mats etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Swing, roundabout, rocking horse, see-saw, dancing</li> <li>Jump on trampoline or do jumping jacks</li> <li>Hang upside down on climbing apparatus</li> <li>Ride a scooter down a ramp</li> <li>Sit and bounce on a therapy ball</li> <li>Stand and twirl in a circle</li> <li>Bend over and place head between legs</li> <li>Do cartwheels</li> </ul>
 Proprioceptive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Threading activities, lace boards</li> <li>Allow child to stand at end of the line when lining up</li> <li>Sit on stool instead of carpet</li> <li>Push heavy furniture</li> <li>Retrieve lunchbox trolleys or deliver library books</li> <li>Carry boxes/books</li> <li>Do the 'wheelbarrow walk'</li> <li>Carry a weighted blanket/weighted backpack</li> <li>Wear a 'bumbag'</li> <li>Jump onto a squishy pile of pillows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Position furniture around edge of room to make navigation easier</li> <li>Coloured tape on floor to indicate boundaries</li> <li>'Arm's length' rule (when speaking to someone)</li> <li>Give jobs e.g. handing out sheets/books/wiping board clean/delivering a message</li> <li>Exercise, dance, wiggle</li> </ul>

# Primary - Practice together and learn what works

I am feeling



because \_\_\_\_\_.

**icould**



# Primary – Zones is a good way to embed open dialogue and a shared language

## The ZONES of Regulation

			
<b>Blue Zone</b> Sad Bored Tired Sick	<b>Green Zone</b> Happy Focused Calm Proud	<b>Yellow Zone</b> Worried Frustrated Silly Excited	<b>Red Zone</b> overjoyed/Elated Panicked Angry Terrified

Energy level  
Low → high

The ZONES of Regulation® Reproducible H

## Which ZONE Would I Be In?

All of the zone colors are okay. There are times when you will be in different zones. Think about times that you expect you would be in the Blue, Green, Yellow, or Red Zone.

I experience all the Zones!

Times I may be in the BLUE ZONE...

Times I may be in the GREEN ZONE...

Times I may be in the YELLOW ZONE...

Times I may be in the RED ZONE...

# Primary – create personalised strategies and encourage children to take ownership

**STOP** [Red box]  
**SLOW** [Yellow box]  
**GO** [Green box]  
**REST AREA** [Blue box]

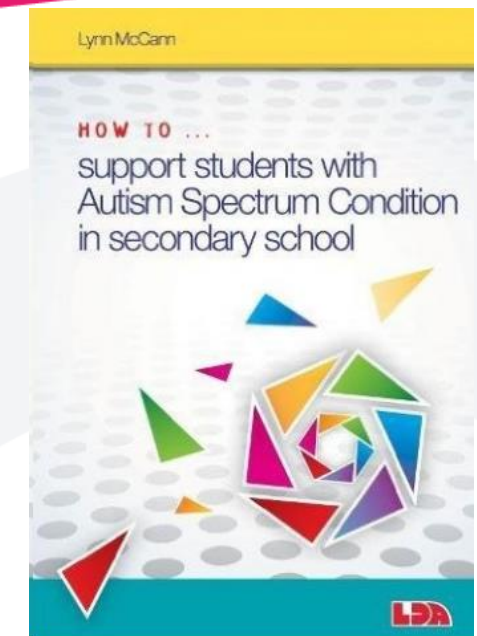
**MY TOOLBOX**

Lazy 8 **Breathing**

<p><b>Jumping Jacks</b></p>	<p><b>Shoulder Rub</b></p>	<p><b>Belly Breath</b></p>
<p><b>Inner Coach</b></p>	<p><b>Take a Break</b></p>	<p><b>Lazy 8 Breathing</b></p>
<p><b>Fidget Ball</b></p>	<p><b>Size of Problem</b></p>	<p><b>Six Sides of Breathing</b></p>



# Secondary



## Preparing an autism friendly secondary classroom - Reachout ASC

### The Classroom environment

1. Each subject teacher will want to make their classroom welcoming and most of all, functional for a classes of different year groups coming into their room each day. Displays tend to be less of an issue for secondary rooms but clutter can be as much a problem for children who are visually distracted and find it hard to focus as in any classroom.
2. Have a clear space around your whiteboard. Enables students to focus solely on the screen / board. You could put key vocabulary words for the topic on the wall at the side of the whiteboard for those whose attention may wander slightly. You'd have to change this for each year group but if you have them on Velcro they can be easily changed.
3. Display visual pictures with key vocabulary. This helps students remember and understand if they miss or don't understand verbal information.
4. Keep class rules simple. Most rules can be summed up in 2 points: Be safe. Be kind.
5. Have a seating plan and keep to it. It really is worth allowing autistic/SEND pupils have some say in where they sit. For example, having to look over the tops of other people's heads can mean accessing what is on the board more difficult for them.
6. Suggest disorganised students colour code their timetable with the colour of the subject exercise books. It might help them bring the right book to your lesson.
7. It is likely an autistic student or SEND will struggle to have the right equipment. If that's going to be likely in your class, have a spare set for them, kept in class and that they can access without making a fuss at the beginning of the lesson.

# Secondary

## Accessing lessons

1. Copying off the board takes a lot of switching attention which can be so difficult for Autistic/SEND students. Plan to give out printed copies of the text and ask students to highlight key words or important points, it is much more effective.
2. For those who find writing difficult; find other ways of recording what they know, so they can vary how they record their work. For example, most computers have speech to text (they can try this for homework first), or typing it on a laptop or even dictating to a recording device. Diagrams, mind maps, power point, photos and other visual recording can help some pupils.
3. Remember your autistic students could be the best student you have, they may know as much as you do about your subject and be extremely bright. But that could mean they are easily bored and don't get the point of when you need to go over information for other students.
4. Printing off homework on sticky labels and giving these out means homework is always accurately recorded in their planners. If you have an online homework system, make sure the autistic/SEND student (and their parents) know how it works and can access it.
5. A pupil passport is a great way to give every subject teacher the key information about each student; read it and plan the strategies into your whole class teaching.
6. Use TAs wisely. The hardest thing is finding time to talk to them but if you can make time you will reap the benefits. (This is easier when a TA is based in a department, make sure they are part of departmental meetings). Have a look at this [publication from the Education Endowment Foundation for tips on using TAs better](#).
7. Group work is a common complaint from my autistic students, they hate it! I suggest subject teachers plan structured paired work to help all students work collaboratively, and build up to group work. A structure, with well-defined roles works best. [See our blog on group work](#).

# Secondary

## Parents

1. Set up an email link with parents. Some secondaries have good parent communication systems in place, others have yet to get there. But as a subject leader try to communicate directly with parents about their child in the first half term. They will want to know how they are settling in. You could send a postcard. Ask them if there is anything they can share that will help you teach their child in your subject. It maybe having a spare PE kit in school will be vital for them actually having PE kit. It may be that you need to email the ingredients for cooking directly to the parents to ensure that the student will have what they need. English teachers might use a book they really like.
2. Pass on any information (especially good things) to the SENCO or pastoral leader whoever is the person who might speak to parents the most. Having up to date information to hand will make their job much easier.
3. Talk to other subject teachers and the SENCO before you contact parents about a behaviour or other problem. It will be important to know if there is a similar problem in other subjects and if there are any particular links. For example, it could be a break time issue that impacts on your lesson just after break and other subjects find the same on the other days.

# Secondary

## Behaviour

1. School is often overwhelming for autistic/SEND students. Be aware of sensory sensitivities and needs. The student may need a break occasionally. A time-out card can help them do this without fuss. They can be taught how to use this to calm down and return to the class.
2. Low level disruptions are often attempts to communicate. Students who find it hard to follow or join in conversation often act loudly or silly because that gets feedback and acceptance from their peers. Structured paired work and teaching conversation / public speaking skills can help the whole class.
3. Other low level disruption occurs when a student doesn't understand what they have to do or feel they can't do it. They might be unable to ask for help, or try to distract you from asking them what they have done. Don't just explain using the same words – a task may need breaking into smaller chunks and explaining more clearly.
4. Be aware of those who find being the centre of attention too much to cope with. Give them chance to answer questions through writing answers down on a whiteboard, talk to them individually and don't point out anything they are doing in front of the whole class.
5. Talk to your autistic/ SEND students about what they are interested in. Especially if they have a topic they like to talk about a lot. They will really appreciate you taking a few minutes every now and again to chat to them about it. Get to know them and what makes them tick. All children work well for the teachers they know like them.
6. Students with autism can be very honest. I was once told I stank because I'd put perfume on that day. Don't take anything personally. If they are shouting obscenities at you they are VERY stressed and you should use your skill to help them not get into verbal combat with them.
7. Know who you can call for help. Prevention is better than reaction but if you are in a position where the student can't cope with your lesson and has become angry or upset, know what the plan is and follow it carefully. It works best when every teacher has a visual card with the plan on it that they can show the student and so reduce verbal language which causes more stress.
8. Have high expectations of behaviour, but know that autistic / SEND students often need support to achieve those standards. Writing a clear explanation down of what you want, rather than telling off for what they are doing wrong works much better than lots of nagging. Believe me!



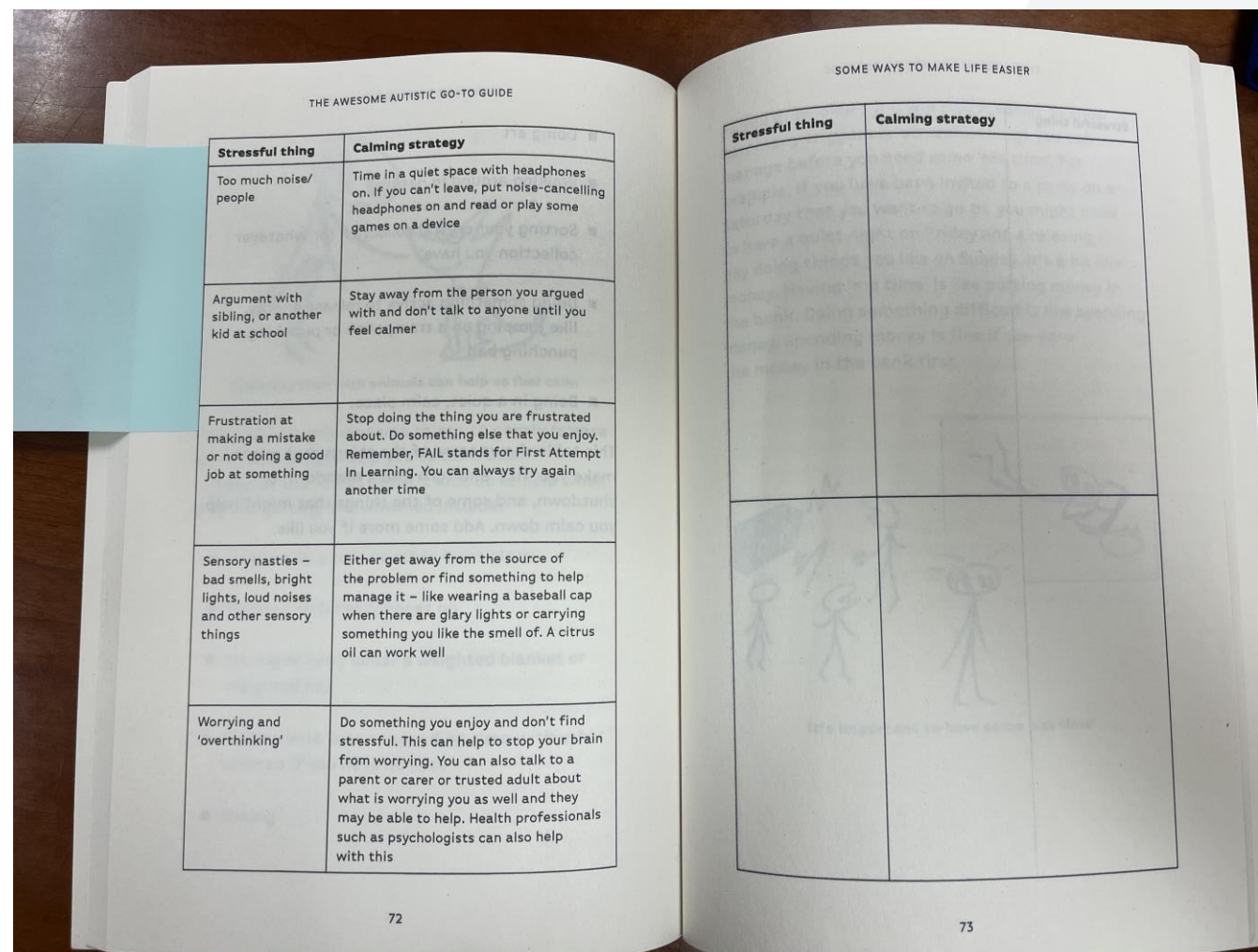
# Regulatory activities - Secondary

Sense	Over-reactivity	Under-reactivity
<b>Olfactory (smell)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>be aware of strong smells you may be wearing, or smells in the room (!)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>spray citrus room spray before doing work</li> <li>use scented materials in projects</li> </ul>
<b>Auditory (sound)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ear defenders/ear plugs</li> <li>work in quiet environment</li> <li>consider music with soft, even beat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use sound producing resources</li> <li>request visual cues to support verbal information</li> <li>consider music with varied pitch or beat</li> </ul>
<b>Visual (sight)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>low lighting</li> <li>workstation</li> <li>pastel coloured paper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>bright lighting</li> <li>use a highlighter to underline text</li> <li>brightly coloured paper</li> <li>work on a slant board</li> </ul>
<b>Gustatory (taste)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>drink from sports bottle</li> <li>chew/suck on a sensory keychain or necklace</li> <li>blow whistles, bubbles etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>eat crunchy/chewy foods at breaktime</li> <li>have a water bottle with cold water in at your desk</li> </ul>
<b>Tactile (touch)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>try a weighted blanket</li> <li>use resistive putty</li> <li>find materials that are calming to you e.g., fur, velvet etc. Attach these to your book, under the desk or in your pocket</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider tight clothes underneath your outfit</li> <li>weighted blanket</li> <li>hold something cool</li> <li>gently and quickly rub the skin</li> <li>wash your face with cold water</li> <li>use a fidget tool</li> <li>stroke an animal or soft toy</li> </ul>
<b>Proprioception (body awareness)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>request to stand at start/end of line when lining up</li> <li>sit on chair instead of on the floor</li> <li>push heavy furniture (request 'heavy jobs' such as carrying books)</li> <li>try a weighted blanket</li> <li>wear a backpack or bumbag</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>put coloured tape on the floor/desk to show boundaries</li> <li>exercise, dance, wiggle</li> <li>request movement-based tasks</li> <li>try 'arm's length rule' when considering how close to stand</li> </ul>
<b>Vestibular (balance)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>take a break and do an 'errand'</li> <li>request 'heavy jobs' such as carrying books or laundry between tasks</li> <li>rock in rocking chair or swing</li> <li>request visual cues for stops in movement activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>jump on trampoline or do jumping jacks</li> <li>hang upside down on climbing frame</li> <li>ride a scooter</li> <li>bounce on a yoga ball</li> <li>bend over and put head between your legs</li> <li>stand and spin round</li> <li>request 'heavy jobs' such as carrying books or laundry between tasks</li> </ul>
<b>Interoception (internal body)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>try yoga/meditation to increase awareness of body parts and how they are feeling</li> <li>try breathing exercises to feel calmer and be able to focus on small signs about what is going on inside the body (look up figure of 8 breathing and box breathing)</li> <li>try 'alerting' activities that get you out of breath, to get to know what a racing heart feels like (link this to emotions).</li> </ul>	

# Secondary

- [Children with autism: Strategies for accessing the curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4](#) An old document that has plenty of still current advice
- [Wiltshire County Council \(2006\). The secondary teacher's toolkit for including young people with social communication difficulties](#) (including autism spectrum disorders & Asperger syndrome). A good handbook that's free to download
- [McCann, Lynn \(2017\). How to support pupils with autism spectrum condition in secondary school. Learn Develop Achieve](#) My own book covers much more advice and support such as tests, social relationships, emotional development, more subject and access to learning advice, Puberty, Sex and Relationships Education, sensory support and transition.
- [autism\\_secondary\\_toolkit\\_sg\\_-\\_v4\\_6\\_june\\_2019.pdf \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)

Encourage the young person to keep a journal of triggers and the calming tools that support them. It could look like the one below:



## Top Tips for supporting ASC pupils in your secondary classes.

Autism is a lifelong condition, which affects how a person communicates, interacts socially, and can present difficulties or differences for the person in their thinking, imagination, perception and sensitivity of their senses.



### **Top Tip No.1 - Think about your seating plan.**

A pupil with ASC needs to see the board clearly, They may need to be near the door, Can benefit from sitting next to a good role model, Take into account sensory distractions.

### **Top Tip No.2 - Cue the pupil into the lesson / instructions.**

Use their name and tell them it is time to listen, Be specific about what you are going to do. (Use First, then, next, finally).

### **Top Tip No.3 - Summarise the main points and instructions.**

Can write main points on board. Ask pupil "Tell me what you have to do." rather than "Do you understand." Check understanding in smaller chunks rather than all at the end.

### **Top Tip No.4 - Break the lesson tasks into a clear list.**

Use the board or individual list for pupil. Get pupil in the habit of ticking off each part of the task on their list. Add a reward for completing task if able to.

### **Top Tip No.5 – Use visual support and active learning wherever possible.**

Pupils with ASC are much more visual learners and will be more engaged in lesson. Helps the pupil build a visual memory of the subject matter.

### **Top Tip No.6 – Keep it Short and Simple (KISS) when giving instructions.**

Say what you want rather than what you don't want. Make it direct and literal. Be specific about what you want. (Use First, then, next, finally). Don't use sarcasm or expect them to get humour unless you know they will.

### **Top Tip No.7 – Teach how to engage in class discussions.**

Use factual questions rather than asking for opinions or abstract ideas. Warn them that you will be asking them about '\*\*\*\*' after ----.

### **Top Tip No.8 – Teach how to work in a group.**

Start with a pair (see example) make it highly structured, clear roles and outcomes.

Do not put pupil under stress by putting them in unstructured, open-ended tasks in a group, especially when pupil's choose their group.

### **Top Tip No.9 – Tasks and homework that work best have a clearly identified outcome.**

Use familiar, repetitive and highly-structured tasks wherever possible. Pupils will need supporting to plan out more open-ended or imaginative tasks. Let them do homework related to their special interests whenever possible.

### **Top Tip No.10 – Give the pupil a break!**

Understand that they are not 'doing it on purpose' – ASC is a difference in the way the brain works and processing can take much longer. Let the pupil take a break if they are stressed. They can be very susceptible to sensory overload.

[Slide 1 \(reachoutasc.com\)](http://reachoutasc.com)



## Empowering Autistic Teenagers to understand the 4 Challenges

### Sensory Processing Challenges

Light, noise, touch, taste, smell.

Sensory overload is the primary reason for rising anxiety and a panic 'fight or flight' response.

You cannot filter out or tone down these stimuli.

#### What you can do about it

Understand your sensitivities and how to avoid sensory overload or modify it. Assess the school environment and know how much you can handle before needing a break. Use moulded ear plugs if noise sensitive. Create a colour-coded timetable to show where sensitivities may erupt and interfere with learning.

#### As an adult you will....

Know what to disclose and ask for, make modifications to your work environment. Your home will need to be a safe haven, a sensory-friendly escape to re-charge.

### Information Processing Challenges

The world moves too fast and this creates too much information for you to process. Neurotypical people can filter out and process much of this information subconsciously but you find this difficult. You have to process information received simultaneously and consciously, which quickly drains your mental energy.

#### What you can do about it

Be conscious of how much mental energy you have. Learn what to avoid and when to ask for help. Eat a good diet, sleep well and exercise daily. Develop interests and hobbies to help you to relax. Don't wait until you feel yourself melting down – slow it down, tone it down and give yourself breaks. Realise that you will get things done but it just might take you a bit longer, Use visual strategies to make sense of information and help organise and learn it.

Extra time in exams if exam concessions apply.

#### As an adult you will .....

Appraise things in your life to assess how draining they will be. You may need to take a break to re-charge – a brisk walk or going to get a drink of water. Be honest with people about how much you can effectively handle. You may not be able to multi-task but will need to be given the information sequentially and visually. Tell your colleagues to use clear language when explaining tasks to you, or get written instructions.

### Executive Functioning Challenges

You will have a hard time organising yourself to get things done: you may forget to do things or where you put things, have difficulty judging how much time you will take to do things, have problems doing several jobs at once and struggle with transitioning from one job to another. You will struggle to make deadlines, to plan things and then organise what is needed.

#### What you can do about it

Use smartphones, ipads and wristwatch alarms etc. to create lists, calendars, written instructions, and schedules/routines for everyday activities etc. Colour-code files and information so that you can categorise and retrieve information when you need it. Preview and prepare for non-routine events – develop a script, social story or map to show how to do it. Have an exit plan if it does become overwhelming for you.

#### As an adult you will .....

Have a few supportive people around you to help out. Tell people at work about your challenges and get help with timing and making plans.

### Social and Communication Challenges

You have a hard time reading social cues and reading the thoughts, feelings and emotions, perspectives and intentions of others. This can make you quite vulnerable as you may not see the real motives behind people's actions. You are pragmatic, intellectual and factual. You may be good at interacting with one person at a time but may struggle in a group. You may find it difficult to keep up with non-verbal information, reading between the lines and understanding the many different invisible social cues and rules.

#### What you can do about it

You love and care for others in your own way and can be a committed friend and partner. You will be there and do things for others in a practical way but may struggle at supporting people emotionally. Once you trust someone you can be upfront about your strengths and weaknesses. They will have to spell out their thoughts and feelings to you and you will both clarify and verify information with each other to stop any misunderstandings or upset.

#### As an adult you will .....

Have to be upfront with your boss and co-workers. They need to know that although you may seem rude or overbearing, you don't mean to be. You may not realise that it is hurting their feelings. You may need key figures in your life to tell you when you are stepping out of line and what you need to do about it. These people need to be able to tell you to stop quickly, saying not only what you are doing wrong, but what you need to do to put it right. They can help you to interpret the many different invisible social rules.

# Additional reading and resources

Learn more about Sensory Processing: [Sensory Processing - an overview | ScienceDirect Topics](#)

Free downloadable visuals: [Downloadable Resources - Reachout ASC](#)

# Additional reading



## Autism and education in England 2017

A report by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism on how the education system in England works for children and young people on the autism spectrum

### Anxiety is misunderstood as bad behaviour

We heard from parents and teachers – both in our surveys and in our evidence sessions – that poor understanding of autism means that children are often punished by schools for what is seen as ‘poor behaviour’, when what is often going on is an expression of how anxious a child is in the school environment.

Schools do not always recognise that the behaviour they see may be a child on the autism spectrum’s attempt to communicate their anxiety, and indicate that their needs are not being met. The school environment may be very difficult for children on the autism spectrum and adjustments should be made to help them cope. A school that does not make these necessary reasonable adjustments – as mandated in the Equality Act 2010 – and instead focuses on the ‘behaviour’ that ensues, is setting a child up to fail.

“Schools are too big, busy and noisy. I became really ill because staff kept putting me in the same situation over and over again and didn’t sort out the problem”

Young person on the autism spectrum, response to survey

“Anxiety can be overcome with careful management of the learning environment”

Teacher, response to survey

“They do not understand sensory issues, and how heightened anxiety can stop a child learning”

Parent, response to survey

“I have had to go part-time at work so I could go to the school regularly to try and work with them to meet his needs”

Parent, response to survey

The evidence submitted to our inquiry raises two broad groups of children and young people on the autism spectrum who are particularly poorly served by the current education system. One is young people of secondary school age who are academically able but who struggle to cope in a mainstream secondary school environment. The parents of some of these children made clear that in many areas, existing mainstream provision is not set up so that they are able to fulfil their academic potential. Some suggested that their children needed a more specialist setting to receive an education in

an environment that suited their particular needs, and to receive any extra support they needed with things like communication and social interaction. Few of these types of school exist. Improving the ability of mainstream schools to support this cohort of children is vital to ensuring they can get the right help in an inclusive setting, but in some cases a special school may still be necessary.

The other group is children on the autism spectrum who also have a learning disability and complex needs, and whose behaviour may be perceived as challenging. This latter group of children may end up in residential schools, sometimes a long way from their homes, not because a positive decision has been made that this is the best educational opportunity for them but because everything else has been tried, and has failed. Good quality residential schools where the full range of a child’s need can be met around the clock may be the best option for some children on the autism spectrum, but this needs to be the result of careful decision-making and not a last resort.

# Additional Research & Reading

[Distraction, distress and diversity: Exploring the impact of sensory processing differences on learning and school life for pupils with autism spectrum disorders – ScienceDirect](#)

## **Background**

Many individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) experience sensory differences that impact daily functioning. This study aimed to capture parent and teacher perspectives on how sensory differences affect learning and life at school for pupils with ASD.

## **Method**

Fifty-seven parents and seventy UK teachers completed a bespoke online questionnaire that focused on the type of sensory experiences encountered at school and how these experiences impacted learning and school life for autistic pupils.

## **Results**

Parents and teachers reported that sensory experiences at school were frequently negative. Data indicate that it was largely negative sensory experiences that impacted learning, in turn causing distraction, anxiety and limited participation. Although five teachers highlighted positive sensory experiences, the examples offered focused on children's ability to engage in classroom activities, once their sensory needs had been met (*e.g.* using weighted blankets).

Factors including predictability of sensory input, school resources, and staff knowledge minimized sensory disruption.

## **Conclusions**

According to teachers and parents, sensory experiences significantly impact learning and school life for autistic pupils and these findings can inform teacher training and intervention development.

# Additional reading and resources

**The National Autistic Society** is the UK's leading autism charity. Since we began over 50 years ago, we have been pioneering new ways to support people and understand autism. We continue to learn every day from the children and adults we support in our schools and care services. Based on our experience, and with support from our members, donors and volunteers, we provide life-changing information and advice to millions of autistic people, their families and friends. And we support professionals, politicians and the public to understand autism better so that more autistic people of all ages can be understood, supported and appreciated for who they are. Until everyone understands.  
[www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

**Ambitious about Autism** is the national charity for children and young people with autism. We provide services, raise awareness and understanding, and campaign for change. Through TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College we offer specialist education and support. Our ambition is to make the ordinary possible for more children and young people with autism.  
[www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](http://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk)

**The Centre for Research in Autism and Education (CRAE)** is a partnership between UCL Institute of Education, the leading centre for education and social research in the UK, and Ambitious about Autism, the national charity for autistic children and young people. CRAE conduct groundbreaking scientific research to enhance knowledge about interventions, education and outcomes for autistic children, young people and adults; ensuring this knowledge is effectively translated so that it can make a real difference to people's everyday lives. CRAE also work with the autism community (including autistic people, their families, and the professionals who work with them) to promote awareness, and acceptance, of autism. The Centre is generously supported by funding from the Pears Foundation. [crae.ioe.ac.uk](http://crae.ioe.ac.uk)



# Additional reading and resources

## Books:

Sensory Strategies: Practical ways to help children and young people with autism learn and achieve by Corinna Laurie. Published by The National Autistic Society

Sensory Play (Play in the EYFS) by Sue Gascoyne. Published by Practical Pre-School Books

Building Bridges through Sensory Integration by Paula Aquilla, Shirley Sutton & Ellen Yack (Future horizons, ISBN: 978-1935567455).

The Out of Sync Child by carol Stock Kranowitz (Perigree Books ISBN: 978-039953-165-1).

Sensational Kids; Hope and help for children with sensory processing disorder (SPD) by Lucy Jane Miller (Perigree Books ISBN: 978-0399167829).

Too Loud, Too Bright, Too Fast, Too Tight: What to do if you are sensory defensive in an overstimulating world by Sharon heller (Harper Collins ISBN: 978-0-06-093292-3).

# Feedback

**Autism Training feedback:  
Professionals 2023-24**



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