








Sensory environments checklist

This sensory checklist is to help practitioners to assess and create an environment that enables the participation of pupils with autism. It does not cover all aspects, but gives ideas on the ways in which a setting might be altered if pupils experience sensory processing difficulties and find it hard or very anxiety-provoking to tolerate certain sensations or situations.

Sense	Good practice and evidence to look for	Current situation	Action needed
General sensory issues	Sensory profiles for individual pupils are completed and used to identify strategies to meet their sensory needs. Practitioners should have agreed strategies in place if a pupil is experiencing sensory overload e.g. there is a quiet room or space available.		
Visual 	Lighting is suitable for pupils with autism e.g. fluorescent lights are regularly checked as flickering lights can be very disturbing The room is orderly and not cluttered so that pupils can make sense of the environment e.g. materials and resources are clearly labelled with a picture or symbol.		
Taste 	Practitioners are aware of individual differences in pupils's taste and make adjustments e.g. adapting cooking activities. Practitioners allow opportunities for pupils to gradually taste lots of different things to aid sense development.		
Sound 	Sounds from room equipment are kept to a minimum e.g. TVs, videos, audio systems, lights and computers are switched off when not in use to avoid a mains hum. Strategies are in place to reduce noise e.g. using playmats on hard floors, and loud/unexpected noises are avoided where possible.		
Smell 	Smells from outside, or in a setting, are monitored and kept to a minimum e.g. shut a window to stop unwanted smells or use unscented materials in activities Practitioners are aware that pupils may react to the smell of others e.g. staff deodorant or perfume.		

Sense	Good practice and evidence to look for	Current situation	Action needed
<p>Touch</p> 	<p>Practitioners are aware of individual differences in pupils's touch and make adjustments e.g. using different role play clothes or placing pupils at the front/back of a line. Practitioners allow opportunities for pupils to gradually experience new textures e.g. use a spoon, straw or plastic gloves to explore materials.</p>		
<p>Balance</p> 	<p>Practitioners encourage activities which develop balance e.g. swing, roundabout, rocking horse, see-saw, dancing. Practitioners break down physical activities into small steps and use visual cues e.g. when to stop in movement activities.</p>		
<p>Body awareness</p> 	<p>There is sufficient space for pupils to sit and move around comfortably. Practitioners encourage activities which develop body awareness and fine motor skills e.g. parachute games and threading beads.</p>		

Sensory assessment checklist

(based on the sensory profile checklist from Bogdashina, 2003 and included in the IDP autism spectrum)

Tick which apply and then consider which teaching staff need to know this information.

Where possible, complete this in discussion with the parents or carers and the pupil.

No.	Item	Yes	No	Don't know	Action required
1	Resists changes to familiar routines				
2	Does not recognise familiar people in unfamiliar clothes				
3	Dislikes bright lights				
4	Dislikes fluorescent lights				
5	Is frightened by flashes of light				
6	Puts hands over eyes or closes eyes in bright light				
7	Is attracted to lights				
8	Is fascinated by shiny objects and bright colours				
9	Touches the walls of rooms				
10	Enjoys certain patterns (e.g. brickwork, stripes)				
11	Gets lost easily				
12	Has a fear of heights, lifts, escalators				
13	Has difficulty catching balls				
14	Is startled when approached by others				
15	Smells, licks, taps objects and people				
16	Appears not to see certain colours				
17	Uses peripheral vision when doing a task				

No.	Item	Yes	No	Don't know	Action required
18	Finds it easier to listen when not looking at person				
19	Remembers routes and places extremely well				
20	Can memorise large amounts of information on certain topics				
21	Finds crowded areas very difficult				
22	Prefers to sit at back of group or front of group				
23	Covers ears when hears certain sounds				
24	Can hear sounds which others do not hear				
25	Is very distressed by certain sounds				
26	Bangs objects and doors				
27	Is attracted by sounds and noises				
28	Does not like shaking hands or being hugged				
29	Likes a hug if chosen to do this				
30	Only seems to hear the first words of a sentence				
31	Repeats exactly what others have said				
32	Very good auditory memory for songs and rhymes				
33	Dislikes the feel of certain fabrics and substances				
34	Seems unaware of pain and temperature				
35	Dislikes certain foods and drinks				
36	Seeks pressure by crawling under heavy objects				
37	Hugs very tightly				
38	Enjoys feeling certain materials				

No.	Item	Yes	No	Don't know	Action required
39	Dislikes certain everyday smells				
40	Eats materials which are not edible				
41	Likes to have food presented in a certain way on the plate				
42	Dislikes crunchy or chewy food				
43	Quite clumsy and bumps into objects and people				
44	Finds fine motor movements hard				
45	Has difficulty running and climbing				
46	Finds it hard to ride a bike				
47	Does not seem to know where body is in space				
48	Has poor balance				
49	Afraid of everyday movement activities such as swings, slides, trampoline				
50	Has extremely good balance				