

# SENSORY CHECKLIST



A simple checklist to assess how children cope with sensory needs in the school setting.

# Supporting Pupils With Sensory Needs

When a pupil has difficulty processing sensory input, their brain has to work hard to regulate and make sense of that information. And all that effort spent regulating their senses leaves fewer resources for regulation in other areas, such as emotions.

That means if a pupil has difficulty managing their emotions and behaviour in class, it's always a good idea to investigate whether they're experiencing any sensory issues, and put in place support strategies if they are.

**Important: sensory processing issues are not confined to pupils with a diagnosis of autism.**

## We recommend completing this checklist for children who:

- dislike changes to their routine
- become dysregulated easily
- have a low tolerance to others
- appear anxious (hypervigilant)
- have limited awareness to personal safety
- become over excited when playing games involving movement
- appear always 'on the go'.

# SENSORY CHECKLIST



## Visual/Sight

✓ Tick where appropriate

Visual Seeking		Visual Avoiding	
	Looks for bright/flashing lights		Overly sensitive to bright lights (may complain or close eyes)
	Enjoys lining up items in rows or by colour		Easily distracted by bright displays
	Enjoys playing with toys that spin		Finds 'busy' rooms challenging
	Loves to play with shiny objects		Seeks out dark spaces
	Appears to enjoy games which involve bumping and crashing different toys		Often rubs eyes when focusing on work
	Stands too close to interactive whiteboard/screen		Avoids eye contact with others

### How to support:



Allow the child to play with visually stimulating equipment (such as a torch). Ensure this time is carefully managed and structured.

### How to support:



Schedule regular visual breaks into their day. Use a blackout tent (if possible) or create a bespoke low-stimulating area for them to use.



## Touch/Tactile

Tactile Seeking		Tactile Avoiding	
	Enjoys touching everyone/everything		Dislikes being touched unexpectedly
	May not recognise when they have been touched (unless forcefully)		Avoids having their hair brushed
	Unaware when they have dirty hands/runny nose		Dislikes being close to others (lining up)
	Seeks messy play		Sensitive to certain items of clothing or labels
	Repeatedly seeks out certain surfaces and textures e.g. rough brick walls, smooth worktops		Rarely wants to be held/cuddled
	Repeatedly rubs or brushes objects on their face/lips		Overly sensitive when they hurt themselves
	Enjoys getting messy e.g. will play in puddle with hands		Avoids touching certain fabrics/textures e.g. velvet
			Dislikes hands getting messy - may wash hands frequently
			Walks on tiptoes on new surfaces/textures

### How to support:



Make a 'feely box' and regularly change the items in the box. Use items with different textures and shapes to keep the box exciting.

### How to support:



Choose fabrics/ clothing that the child prefers - cut out clothing tags and turn socks inside out to avoid the seam.

For more free copies of this checklist, visit [beaconschoolsupport.co.uk/sensorychecklist](https://beaconschoolsupport.co.uk/sensorychecklist)

# SENSORY CHECKLIST



## Hearing/Auditory

✓ Tick where appropriate

Auditory Seeking		Auditory Avoiding	
	Does not respond to name being called (distracted by other sounds in the classroom)		Dislikes loud noises (such as the school bell)
	Make noises (appears unaware) e.g. bangs, taps, bangs objects to make sounds		Easily distracted by sounds (sometimes not noticeable to others)
	Asks for instructions to be repeated		Strong dislike of loud unexpected noises (fire alarm)
	Loves loud equipment (TV, radio)		Covers ears to avoid noise
	Seems oblivious to certain sounds		Prefers a quiet environment - may ask others to stop talking
	Stands close to interactive screen or TV (might put their ear to the speaker)		Avoids certain areas of the school that are often loud (dining hall)

### How to support:



Use visual prompts to help the child to understand the instructions given.



Minimise background noise (where possible) to help the child to maintain focus.

### How to support:



Think about where the pupil sits - ensure that they are sat near to you when you are teaching to help them to maintain focus.



Provide ear defenders to help decrease potential stressful (and noisy) environments.



## Smell/Olfactory

Olfactory Seeking		Olfactory Avoiding	
	Smells items and objects before engaging in a task		Reacts to slight smells that don't appear to bother others
	Doesn't notice strong odours (that most people would complain about)		Complains that their friends smell e.g. will say your breath smells to others
	May smell objects and walls when entering a room		Certain smells can cause them to feel or be sick
	Smells food before tasting it		Avoids certain smells (such as perfume)
	Seems oblivious to certain smells		May avoid key areas in school (such as the dining hall)

### How to support:



Provide opportunities for the child to explore different smells. Use smelling bottles or boxes to create excitement and change these smells regularly.

### How to support:



Make the environment as fragrance-free as possible. Consider asking the cleaning staff to use non-smelling cleaning products for the classroom and the toilets.



Sit the pupil away from any strong smelling objects such as the bin or sink.

# SENSORY CHECKLIST



## Taste/Gustatory

✓ Tick where appropriate

Gustatory Seeking		Gustatory Avoiding	
	Bites or sucks their fingers or thumb		Refuses to eat textured foods or foods with a lot of flavour
	Chews inedible objects and equipment such as school pencils, rubbers etc		Dislikes brushing their teeth
	Prefers foods with lots of flavours		Prefers to eat bland food
	Chews on clothing such as their jumper sleeve or shirt collar		Will eat the same food repeatedly
	Tastes non-food items such as paint, glue etc		Resistant to trying new food - may cause them to gag
	Drools or dribbles excessively		Avoids hot foods
	May bite others		Avoids cold foods

### How to support:



Provide a sensory aid such as a 'chewy' or chew-able jewellery. There are loads of different options online.

### How to support:



Always make sure food looks appealing and manageable for the child.



Provide a visual menu and allow the child to choose their lunch before arriving at the dining hall.



## Body position/Proprioception

Proprioception Seeking		Proprioception Avoiding	
	Enjoys physical activities that involve jumping and crashing		Dislikes busy environments and crowded areas such as the dining hall or main corridor
	Walks heavily (stomps feet)		Avoids standing close to others
	Enjoys rough play or play fighting		Refuses or dislikes swings, slides and other playground equipment
	Has a limited awareness of personal space		Dislikes tight clothing
	Enjoys bear hugs and other deep pressure exercises e.g. holding hands		Overly sensitive to touch
	Likes small/tight spaces and clothing		Can appear lazy or lethargic

### How to support:



Try out different ways for the child to sit during a lesson. Allow them (sometimes) to choose to stand or lie down whilst listening to the teacher.

### How to support:



Schedule in opportunities for the child to become more aware of their body by playing different games that encourage them to name their body parts e.g. Simon says

# SENSORY CHECKLIST



## Vestibular/Balance

✓ Tick where appropriate

Vestibular Seeking		Vestibular Avoiding	
	Constantly moving (not able to stay still)		Avoids play equipment that cause feet to leave the ground
	Spins or perform other fast movements (doesn't appear to become dizzy)		Dislikes activities that cause them to be upside down
	Climbs on furniture and other equipment		Avoids play equipment that involves high movement e.g. slides, swings
	Constantly running, skipping, hopping instead of walking around the classroom		Moves slowly around the school building
	Rocks on their chair/floor		Dislikes going up and down stairs (will hold the rail tightly)
	Balances their school chair on rear (or front) legs		Easily loses their balance (may appear clumsy)
			Dislikes heights (even the smallest height)

### How to support:



Schedule regular sensory breaks into their day and provide the child with opportunities to climb and balance in a safe environment.

### How to support:



Carefully manage the child's day to avoid major transitions and busy times. Think about locations of classroom toilets and other important resources and ensure that these are all accessible for the child.

## Internal/ Interoception



Interoception is all about understanding and feeling what's going on inside your body. A child with a sensory processing condition may not be able to make sense of these feelings.

	Finds it difficult to regulate their emotions
	Impulsive
	May not recognise when they are feeling hot, cold, hungry or full
	Quick to change moods
	Finds transitions times during school challenging
	Finds it difficult to identify and understand emotions including fear, anger, jealousy
	Poor sleep routine - will need lots of support to fall asleep at night



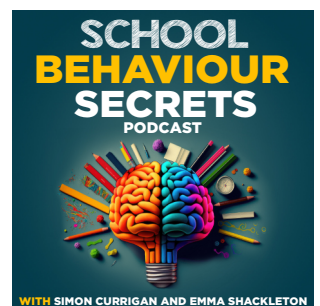
## Get In Touch

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