



Sensory Policy

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Document Reviewed by:	K McCarthy	N Purcell

GOAL: To cultivate a sensory-inclusive school environment where all students, regardless of their sensory processing needs, feel empowered to learn, participate, and flourish.

1. Introduction

At ARTS Education, we recognise that individuals with SEN may have diverse sensory needs and preferences. This policy aims to create a supportive and inclusive environment that caters to these needs and promotes well-being and learning for all.

We learn about our environment and ourselves through our senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch and movement. Proprioception (i.e. the perception or awareness of the position and movement of the body), interoception (i.e. The sense of the internal state of the body that provides information about the physical and emotional conditions of our body, such as hunger, thirst, pain, temperature or mood) and the vestibular sense system (ie our sense of movement and balance) are also important to consider when working with our children and young people.

Without any one of these we are limited in our capacity for learning.

“To function and participate in the world that surrounds us, we need to use our senses. Senses provide individuals with unique experiences and allow us to interact and be involved with the rest of society. They help us to understand the environment around us and respond within it... Imagine what happens when just one or all of your senses are intensified or are not present at all... this is the case for many individuals on the autistic spectrum.” - The Sensory World of the Autistic Spectrum – A greater understanding, The National Autistic Society (NAS) 2003).

2. Sensory Processing

Sensory processing refers to how our brains receive and interpret information from our senses. Individuals with SEN may experience sensory processing difficulties, such as hypersensitivity (over-responsiveness) or hyposensitivity (under-responsiveness) to certain stimuli. This can impact their learning, behaviour, and overall well-being.

3. Our Commitment to our students with sensory needs

- All staff are responsible to share any sensory concerns to SLT/SENCO who will then discuss with parents if the student may require a full assessment from an outside agency e.g. sensory OT.
- Train all staff to understand the possible sensory processing needs of our students and ensure they are aware of strategies to support them.

- We will follow the expertise and advice of the Occupational Therapy service to support the student.
- provide appropriate sensory accommodations for each child in the classroom who has been identified by the school staff, parents/carers and Occupational Therapist as having a sensory processing need.
- provide the most effective sensory support as early as possible for all identified students.
- support and empower students, including those on the Autistic spectrum, to access the curriculum, reach their full potential and enhance their self-esteem.
- stimulate and maintain student curiosity, interest and enjoyment of learning.
- deliver teaching and learning using a multi-sensory approach.
- encourage students to celebrate their success.
- involve parents/carers and students in the assessment and delivery of an individual sensory programme as appropriate.

4. Implementation

ARTS Education staff recognise that each student has a unique learning style. Students, especially those on the Autistic Spectrum, are provided with highly structured teaching and learning settings that take into account their sensory processing needs e.g. access to a quiet workstation in classrooms to minimise auditory sensory overload, or an area without displays to reduce visual overload etc.

Our sensory room is available to be used to provide therapeutic sessions or quiet time for students with or without sensory processing difficulties.

We will implement various strategies to create a sensory-friendly environment, including:

- Visual adjustments: Using calming colours, low stimulation walls, providing fidget toys, and offering alternative seating arrangements.
- Auditory adjustments: Utilising noise-cancelling headphones, offering quiet spaces, and adjusting classroom acoustics.
- Tactile adjustments: Providing weighted blankets (under supervision according to risk assessment), sensory balls, and opportunities for movement breaks.
- Olfactory adjustments: Using unscented products, maintaining good ventilation, and respecting individual preferences.
- Taste adjustments: Offering flexible options during mealtimes and providing sensory-friendly snacks.
- OT suggested exercises to support learners who are under responsive or over responsive to vestibular stimulus.

- Balance exercises / proprioception training advised by OT/ physiotherapist specialists to help improve proprioception
- Mindfulness and other activities designed to help learners be 'in the moment' and recognise the internal signs their bodies give them to help them understand what they need. (i.e. go to the toilet, to eat etc)

5. Behaviour and Emotional Responses

ARTS Education understands that student behaviours and emotional responses are often a sign of sensory overload. Due to this, staff will take care to notice when learners may require additional support to help them regulate. Therefore, teachers will adapt both the environment and teaching approaches to meet the needs of students with sensory processing difficulties in order to not only prevent overload but also to support crisis situations.

Staff will support students to identify strategies that help them manage their sensory issues and encourage them to use these with increasing independence, thus preparing them for adulthood.

6. Staff Training and Communication

All staff will receive regular training on sensory processing and strategies for creating a sensory-friendly environment. We encourage open communication between staff, students, and families to ensure everyone feels heard and supported.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

We review the effectiveness of our policy and practices yearly through student feedback, parent feedback and staff reflection.

8. Conclusion

We believe that by creating a supportive and sensory-friendly environment, we can empower our students with SEN to reach their full potential and thrive in all aspects of school life. We also believe that we can prepare our students for adulthood by helping them to develop strategies to recognise their sensory issues and manage them independently.

9. Additional Resources

- The Sensory Trust: <https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/>
- The National Autistic Society: <https://www.autism.org.uk/>
- The Department for Education: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>

10. Links to Other Policies

Supporting children with medical conditions policy

Special Educational Needs policy

Social and emotional understanding policy

Autism policy

Accessibility policy