



ALL ABOUT SEND

Sensory Needs



Our lives are full of sensory experiences. We all respond to sensory information; we all **touch, move, see, hear, taste and smell**. We are aware of where we are and how we interact with the environment and can respond to/interpret our sensory information with ease and sometimes without even knowing!

It is important to recognise that **difficulties interpreting sensory information** can have an **impact** on **how we feel, how we think** and **how we behave**.

Children in school with sensory needs can have a very different experience of the school day compared to their peers.

Consider this:

Hearing

Highly sensitive	Low sensitivity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noise levels feel magnified Dislikes loud noises Is easily startled Likes to 'chew' to damp down noises Is anxious before expected noises (school bell) Talks loudly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enjoys really loud noises Fails to pick up expected cues.

Vision

Overly sensitive vision	Under-sensitive vision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dislikes bright lighting Prefers a dark environment Is distracted by visual information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes more visual information to react Like bright environment, reflective or spinning light

Taste/ Smell

Overly sensitive	Under-sensitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dislikes strong tastes Likes only bland tastes Tastes or smell objects / clothes Smells people Likes consistent temperature of food – really hot or really cold Over-reacts to new smells Gags easily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eat non-food items Has lots of hard, crunchy food in diet Craves strong tastes Under-reacts to strong, bad or good smell.

Touch

Overly sensitive	Under-sensitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fussy Avoids Loves or hates hugs Mouths objects Only like certain textures, clothes Dislikes or really likes messy play Can react aggressively to another's touch Feels pain and is very sensitive to temperature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take firm touch to respond to stimulus Is sometimes heavy handed Over-grips objects Is sometimes too close to others Has difficulty responding to pain / temperature

Movement

Overly sensitive	Not sensitive enough
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hates spinning, jumping• Becomes dizzy easily or not at all• Hates a busy place full of movement• Avoids feet off ground (swings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is always on the go• Has difficulty sitting still• Is constantly fidgeting/tapping• Runs rather than walks• Takes risks• Is fast but not always well co-ordinated

Body Awareness

Overly sensitive	Not sensitive enough
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Doesn't like others being too close• Creates own boundaries, sometimes inappropriately e.g needing to always go to end of a school line• Removes self from crowds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bumps into or trips over things / people• Stands close to others• Puts self in too small spaces or pushes against corners of the room• Looks at feet when going down the stairs

You can imagine that if a child had difficulties in **one** or **more** of these areas, being in a busy, sometimes **loud** school environment full of different people and smells can be very challenging.

To support children in school we try to identify sensory needs early on and offer support and strategies to help at both school and at home.

Some children may need to wear ear defenders in the classroom or the school hall; others may have a weighted blanket or wristband to help keep them calm. Going into lunch early to avoid the crowds, a bobble cushion to sit on and fiddle toys are also used in order to support a range of needs.

A child **struggling to regulate** their senses may become distressed within school and behaviour can deteriorate. Learning becomes challenging and the child may find it difficult to focus on tasks in class. It is important that home and school work together to identify a child's needs and find ways to best support them.

If you have any concerns or queries regarding your child, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Gee, SENDco, or the class teacher to discuss them.