



Hindlip First School
Tibberton First School



Sensory Processing Difficulties (SPD)

This guidance has been written by our partners at
Perryfields Primary PRU.



Perryfields Primary PRU

What is Sensory Processing?

Sensory Processing is the body's ability to receive sensory information into the nervous system, process it and then allow the body to respond appropriately. Sensory processing is key to our ability to engage with all aspects of everyday life and cope with it. If our ability to process sensations is dysfunctional, we will have difficulties with focusing in the classroom and learning, as well as making social relationships.

Sensory processing is very much attuned to our early experiences in that having inappropriate sensory input may result in hyper vigilance. A child may also seek out sensory experiences which they lacked as a baby or in early childhood. Certain sounds, sights, smells, textures, and tastes can create a sensory overload. Bright or flickering lights, loud noises, certain textures of food, and scratchy clothing are just some of the factors that can make children feel overwhelmed and upset.

Sensory processing difficulties can be a stand-alone disorder called Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) or they can be linked to other things. For example, SPD can be linked to a child's experiences of early trauma, ACE's or Attachment but it can also link alongside dyspraxia, developmental delay, ASD, Fragile X syndrome, ADHD and speech and language disorders among other diagnosis.

Children can be over sensitive to sensory input, under sensitive, or both.

There are 5 commonly known senses: touch, taste, hearing, vision and smell.

BUT there are also additional senses which are more internal:

- **Vestibular** – Located in the middle ear, this supports us in knowing where we are in relation to gravity and other around us, it supports regulation, co-ordination and the ability to adopt an upright position.
- **Interoception** – This is a hidden sense which tells us what is happening inside our body, enabling us to being able to care of ourselves properly and meet basic needs to keep us safe.
- **Proprioception** – this system helps us to know where our limbs are in space and how hard we are pressing, pushing or pulling. These can be passive or active activities.
- **Tactile System** – this enables us as a child to develop not only awareness of objects around ourselves but to develop where we are in relation to others. Poor tactile awareness leads to children dropping things and poor fine co-ordination/motor skills.

Tactile sensitiveness – this affects the way a child engages with the world and tolerates clothing.

There are 2 types of sensory processing difficulties:

Over sensitivity (hypersensitivity), where children sensory avoid because they find it unbearable. They can react to loud noises, busy places, textures, strong odours e.g perfume.

The other is under sensitivity (hyposensitivity) where children sensory seek, wanting to touch everything. These children can often have a high pain threshold, which is why they seek out rough play. They often have a need to be on the go and like spicy, strong flavours and pressure.

Some children are both oversensitive and under sensitive. Dependent on the environment and situation may mean this can change throughout the day.

Children who become sensory over-loaded can often have meltdowns because they feel out of control within their environment.

Difficulties that children may face who have Sensory Processing difficulties:

Sensory Processing difficulties can affect every aspect of a child's functioning – from posture, to catching a ball, focusing in the classroom and engaging in social relationships.

Challenges can include:

- Poor attention regulation – children with this may be very reactive, sensitive or shut down from sensory input in order to protect themselves from the discomfort they experience.
- A need for sensory experiences – this means they are constantly seeking out movement, noise or tactile sensations.
- They may be sensory over- responsive – this means that even the smallest amount of sensation can be over stimulating, thus the child avoids sensory experiences.
- Sensory under- responsive – a large amount of sensation is required before feeling 'just right', thus a child seeks out a high level of sensory stimulus.

Children may become over aroused or under aroused. If arousal levels are not managed the following difficulties can occur:

- **Distractibility/over-excitabile**
- **Sensory defensiveness - dislike of certain noises, touch, light, fear of rocking.**
- **Need for extra stimulation to senses such as sucking, chewing, biting, placing objects in the mouth, rocking, repetitive movements.**

In turn all these sensory difficulties can then lead to developmental delay in a child e.g.

- **Poor postural control**
- **Poor hand eye coordination**
- **Difficulty with spatial awareness**
- **Visual perception deficits**
- **Difficulties with learning**
- **Poor self - esteem**

SUPPORT.....



My need to seek sensory experiences

My inability to focus

My over sensitive sensory responses

My need for a large amount of sensory stimulus

Any developmental delay I may have

The times I get over excited

Supporting Strategies

- Referral to an Occupational Therapist can ascertain the types of sensory difficulties presenting.
- Movement activities – use of ‘Hokki’ stools to allow children to move whilst seated.
- Mov ‘n’ sit cushions to aid fidgeting
- Weighted blankets to support making the child feel grounded and aid better sleeping routines.
- Relax Kids have strategies that promote self or peer massage to support calming.
- Sensory checklists will help to further understand the child and can also establish and then support triggers within the classroom.
- Sensory Diets – these are usually in place on the advice from an Occupational Therapist.

These may include: Sensory activities – in the form of additional sensory input where the child has poor responsiveness or is not very alert. These children may need more stimuli in the form of:

- ✓ Music
- ✓ Bright rooms
- ✓ High impact active movement breaks
- ✓ Using louder clear voices when communicating
- ✓ Directly speaking to the child using their name to cue listening
- ✓ Tactile play and physical touch on shoulder

Sensory breaks within the classroom

- Stretching exercises
- Jumping jacks
- Use of headphones to block out unwanted classroom noise
- Use of weighted blankets and vests
- Calming deep pressure, proprioceptive input
- 'Heavy work' activities eg. Giving out books, pushing, pulling exercises
- Wall presses, upper body exercises
- Yoga moves
- Chewable jewellery / fidget toys

Sensory strategies (Protective)

- Ear defenders to support sound sensitivity
- Removing labels on clothes
- Creating a calm area in the classroom/outside the classroom
- Low stimulation area with bland walls - limit clutter in class and on displays

Sensory Circuits

This is a programme of short and snappy sensory motor skills which supports the children. These also help concentration by enabling children to reach the level of alertness needed for learning.

Children can participate in a session of activities designed to improve brain processing efficiency, alertness, organisation and calming

1. **Alerting** – these activities should be those that make the head change direction rapidly:
Bouncing, skipping, jumping, step ups or spinning.
2. **Organisation** – these activities should provide a motor challenge:
Walking, throwing and catching, obstacle courses, bean bag activities, commando crawling.
3. **Calming** – This set of activities should be ones that calm the child through deep pressure, proprioceptive input and heavy work:
Wall press-ups, walking up the wall from lying on the floor, half press-ups from the floor, firm massage on back, hands, feet and shoulders.

For further information you can refer to the Sensory Motor Circuits Information Leaflet for schools and parents that has been created through

the Paediatric Occupational Therapy department in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust.

Always check that a therapist is properly trained in Sensory Attachment Integration (SAI) as relevant to your child's needs when you are choosing a therapist to work with them.

Useful Resources

Some of the resources in this pack were gathered from:



<https://beaconhouse.org.uk>

Visit the Sensory Integration Network website for more information on Sensory Integration: www.sensoryintegration.org.uk/

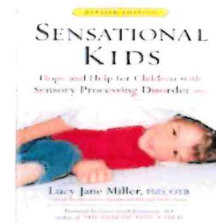
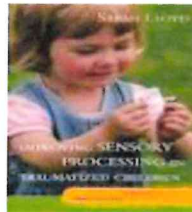
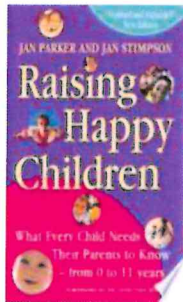


<https://www.relaxkids.com/>



<https://www.smartkidswithld.org>

Suggested Reading



Raising Happy Children:
Lizanne du Plessis

**Improving Sensory Processing
in Traumatized children:**
Sarah Lloyd

Sensational Kids:
Lucy Jane Miller