



Inclusion Newsletter

10th December 2021

Hello and welcome to this term's Inclusion Newsletter.

The lead-up to Christmas can be a tricky time for many children, particularly those with additional needs like autism. Lots of things change at this time of year, both at school with lots of singing, rehearsals and special events that lead to changes in routine, and at home where everything looks different with the decorations up and there might be lots of visitors. Although it's also exciting and fun, for some children all this change can lead to them feeling unsettled and a little anxious. Social stories are a good way to help explain the changes to children – we use these in school to help children feel prepared and to reassure them that it's all OK. The link below contains some good examples which you could adapt for your own family if you feel it may help:

<https://adayinourshoes.com/social-stories-christmas/>

There are also some useful tips about Christmas in general from the National Autistic Society here:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/leisure/christmas/tips>

Children with ASD and/or sensory needs can also find it more difficult when out and about at this time of year, when the shops are so much busier and full of different sights, smells and sounds. Many shops and shopping centres have begun to offer 'autism-friendly' sessions, where they use things like dimmer lighting and quieter music in stores to support people who can experience sensory overload. You can contact or check the websites of your favourite stores to see if this is something they offer.

There is more information about supporting sensory needs in general over the page.

I would like to wish all of our children and families a very Merry Christmas and a relaxing and happy break. Please remember, if you ever have any suggestions, queries or concerns about anything to do with inclusion and SEND, then do call or come and see me at the school.

Mrs Z Huggett
Inclusion Manager



Sensory Processing



Sensory Processing Difficulties (SPD) are very common in children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, but can be seen to varying degrees in many other children as well.

'Sensory Processing' is the ability to organise and process incoming information, received by the body's sensory systems, from the surrounding environment. If the senses are not fully integrated, and the brain does not register or interpret the information properly, it can make daily tasks extremely difficult.

Some children with SPD are **over-responsive** - they are very sensitive to the information and can become overwhelmed by the sensations. These children may become **sensory avoiding**, trying to reduce the overload of sensory input. For example, they might want to wear ear defenders to help them filter out background noise; they may dislike touching certain textures or be fussy eaters; they may find labels in clothes unbearably irritating or may not want to wear underwear.

Others are **under-responsive** - their senses do not register enough information and therefore their bodies cannot act on it correctly. They may become **sensory seeking**, requiring extreme input to allow them to register it. These children can be constantly fidgeting, and might touch or chew everything. They may have a loud voice and/or make noises such as humming. They can seem clumsy or heavy handed, may have a high pain threshold and might even headbang, pinch or bite themselves.

As well as the 5 main senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch) we also have the **Vestibular** (balance) sense, which tells us where we are in space, how fast we are moving and in what direction. In addition, we have the **Proprioceptive** sense - our awareness of body position and movement, where our body parts are and what force our muscles are exerting.

~ Plan ahead - be aware of things that can trigger a reaction in your child and make sure people know ways to work around them where possible. There are lots of resources that can be used both in class and at home to help them manage their sensory needs.

~ Build 'sensory circuits' into your daily routine. These are a three-part set of activities which support sensory integration and help 'ground' your child by reducing the need for them to concentrate on processing sensory information. It is useful to do these just before any activity where the child will need to be focused and calm. The second of the 'Useful Links' below will give you more information about these.



Useful Websites:

<http://www.sensory-processing-disorder.com>

<https://sendsuccess.org.uk/sensory-circuits-sensory-diets/>

<https://www.otforkids.co.uk/conditions/sensory-processing-disorder-spd.php>