**Sensory sensitivities checklist:**

**Visual (sight)Sensory sensitivities strategies**

***Hyper (over sensitive: sensory defensive)***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strategy*** | **🗸**  or **x** |
| Consider the seating position e.g. away from the bright light of the window or put down the blind. Be aware of shafts of light, shadows etc. |  |
| Provide sunglasses |  |
| Keep the working space uncluttered and organised |  |
| A workstation approach with little decoration on the walls |  |
| Use of coloured overlays for reading, pastel coloured paper for writing |  |
| Change the background colour and the font colour on the computer screen. Remember to change the settings on the interactive whiteboard |  |
| Turn off lights during quiet breaks |  |
| Don’t insist on eye contact. Ask questions to check listening and attention |  |
| Use low wattage bulbs/fluorescent strip lights with faster flickering time/darker coloured bulbs |  |
| Use uplighters / dimmers |  |
| Highlight relevant information. Differentiate worksheets etc. and put minimal visual information on page |  |
| Cover other areas of the page not currently working on |  |
| Be aware of the colours and patterns of clothes that you are wearing |  |
| Consider lighting in the room (no fluorescent lights) |  |
| Avoid white walls |  |
| Use neutral earth & pastoral tones for walls, clothing |  |
| Reduce contact with mirrors, shiny objects |  |

***Hypo (under sensitive: sensory seeking)***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strategy*** | **🗸**  or **x** |
| Provide times to look at brightly coloured objects. Link this into a work schedule |  |
| Keep the room brightly lit with blinds open |  |
| Provide a desk light if the room is too dim |  |
| Highlight the edge of surfaces with tape |  |
| Increase contrasts and direct lighting |  |
| Maintain constant physical environment and specifically teach any changes |  |
| Allow pupil to fully explore a new environment to develop a visual map. |  |

**Auditory (Hearing)**

***Hyper (over sensitive: sensory defensive)***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strategy*** | **🗸**  or **x** |
| Have earplugs or sound blocking headphones to block out the noise |  |
| Use headphones with gentle music to block out unpleasant sounds |  |
| Provide verbal warnings e.g. class, the hall will be noisy |  |
| Avoid crowds if possible |  |
| Warn pupil of loud noises before they occur when possible |  |
| Allow the pupil to cover their ears |  |
| Allow the pupil to take part in music lessons initially outside the closed door of the music room. Gradually open the door wider until the pupil can enter the room. Use ear plugs to reduce the level of noise heard |  |
| Use rugs where possible to muffle the noise |  |
| Try and provide a less noisy place to sit e.g. away from an open window when there is noise outside |  |
| Close window and door to reduce external noises |  |
| Put pads on chair/table legs to reduce scrapping noises |  |
| Consider acoustics of the room |  |
| Involve the rest of the class in understanding difficulties e.g. teach not to shout, keep noise level low in classroom |  |
| Speak slowly and clearly / do not shout |  |

***Hypo (under sensitive: sensory seeking)***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strategy*** | **🗸**  or **x** |
| Cue pupil in by using his name |  |
| Take into consideration the pupil’s need to make noises whenever possible |  |
| Give instructions one at a time and allow time to process |  |
| Provide tick lists and pictorial support if pupil does not remember |  |
| Allow pupil to talk through a task, often out loud |  |
| Allow opportunity to work in noisy environments |  |
| Play lively music |  |
| Provide visual cues to support response to auditory signals |  |
| Allow need to bang / tap – use reflective surfaces |  |
| Provide noisy toys and stimulation |  |
| Provide single, sharp sounds |  |

**Tactile (touch)**

***Hyper (over sensitive: sensory defensive)***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strategy*** | **🗸**  or **x** |
| Allow the pupil to wear gloves |  |
| Introduce different textures slowly, allowing the pupil to build up tolerance at their own pace |  |
| Let the pupil stand at the beginning or the end of the line |  |
| Avoid aisle seats |  |
| Remove labels that may be uncomfortable |  |
| Allow the pupil to pat cool water on their face if needed |  |
| Allow pupil to drink iced water |  |
| Allow pupil to wear warm clothing when needed |  |
| Allow pupil to use paper towels instead of hand dryers |  |
| Allow pupil to leave the lesson early to avoid crowds when moving around school |  |
| Approach pupil from the front / Warn pupil before touching them |  |
| Don’t insist that they wear clothes that hurt them |  |
| Use pencil grips to experiment with comfortable textures when holding a pencil |  |
| Social story to support response to minor cuts |  |
| Provide a cushion to sit on |  |
| Permit fiddling |  |
| Keep room temperature low or constant |  |
| Ensure socks and shoes are comfortable |  |
| Offer deep pressure activities but need to find a touch that is bearable to pupil |  |

***Hypo (under sensitive: sensory seeking)***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strategy*** | **🗸**  or **x** |
| Use social stories to :   * Develop an understanding of appropriate ways and times of touching others * Find an adult if they are bleeding * What is the weather today? When do I need to wear my coat? |  |
| Establish personal boundaries i.e. use carpet squares, tape, objects |  |
| Teach to stand an arm’s length away from people |  |
| Provide a ‘fidget’ toy to hold and squeeze across the school day |  |
| Provide appropriate objects to chew on e.g. chewy necklace |  |
| Provide crunchy foods to eat e.g. carrot, apple, celery |  |
| Provide opportunities within their schedule to touch desirable textures |  |
| Provide sand and messy play. |  |
| Watch for bruises and injuries |  |
| Prompt verbally or visually to wash hands or blow noise. |  |
| Teach routines for personal hygiene e.g. look in the mirror to see if your face is dirty |  |
| Provide vigorous activity to enable the child to ‘feel’ their body |  |
| Provide opportunity for pupil to brush or rub skin |  |
| Weighted lap mat |  |

**Gustatory (taste)**

***Hyper (over sensitive: sensory defensive)***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strategy*** | **🗸**  or **x** |
| Slowly introduce new tastes, perhaps starting with a sniff, leading to a lick, leading to putting on the lips before putting it in the mouth |  |
| Separate food on the plate |  |
| Address fear of choking/gagging with small stepped approach to develop coping strategies |  |
| Avoid strong food smells, try bland foods |  |
| Dilute food and drinks to decrease stimulation |  |

***Hypo (under sensitive: sensory seeking)***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strategy*** | **🗸**  or **x** |
| Provide opportunities during the day that would allow tasting of appropriate foods that may prevent the need to taste more inappropriate tastes. Link to schedule. |  |
| Provide suitable alternatives to chewing inedible objects e.g. chewing toys/necklaces |  |
| Provide strongly flavoured foods for lunch e.g. spicy foods |  |
| Offer a sports bottle for pupil to drink from |  |

***Hyper (over sensitive: sensory defensive)***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strategy*** | **🗸**  or **x** |
| Request that adults do not use perfume or strongly smelling shower gels, deodorants etc. |  |
| Match the scents of shower gel and shampoo so that you are not giving off a mix of smells |  |
| Try and get unscented classroom equipment/tools |  |
| Try and reduce an unpleasant smell that is wafting into the room by closing the door, positioning the pupil by an open window, providing the pupil with a small fan and place a scent that the pupil likes to offset the unpleasant one |  |
| Provide fresh air, natural smells |  |
| Consider seating position for lunchtimes |  |
| Use social stories to teach pupil appropriate social rules |  |
| Use nose plugs that are available for swimmers (parental consent required |  |

**Olfactory (smell)**

***Hypo (under sensitive: sensory seeking)***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strategy*** | **🗸**  or **x** |
| Allow opportunities to use smells as part of the curriculum |  |
| Play smell games, find substitute for faeces |  |
| Provide a ‘sensory diet’ of smells with time that could be built into the timetable |  |
| Use strong smelling products as rewards to distract from inappropriate smelling behaviours |  |
| Provide visual prompts for recognising smells that denote danger e.g. gas |  |
| Social story to address inappropriate ‘smelling’ behaviours |  |
| Teach signs on bleach bottles etc. |  |
| Consider labelling items in the classroom with an agreed sign that means it is unfit for eating/drinking e.g. paints |  |

**Vestibular (balance)**

***Hyper (over sensitive: sensory defensive)***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strategy*** | **🗸**  or **x** |
| Provide Therabands around chair legs to give something to kick against. |  |
| Don’t expect child to carry out activities in PE that may be difficult i.e. forward rolls, rope work etc. |  |
| Be aware of difficulties and provide coping strategies such as allowing extra time, using a buddy or aid such as holding onto a wall. |  |
| Encourage participation but never force a child to participate in an activity |  |

***Hypo (under sensitive: sensory seeking)***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strategy*** | **🗸**  or **x** |
| Use electric toothbrush |  |
| Provide opportunities for swinging, spinning, running, jumping on a trampoline |  |
| Have a rocking chair, or hammock/swing chair outside the classroom |  |
| Encourage spinning, rolling, swinging, twirling in PE lessons |  |
| Provide objects to hold, squeeze. |  |
| Provide opportunities for swimming |  |
| Create purposeful movement breaks e.g. deliver register, clear table etc |  |
| Encourage mini physical activity breaks ( see C & I Intervention packages) |  |

**Proprioceptor (Position of body in space)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strategy*** | **🗸**  or **x** |
| Provide appropriate seating equipment. |  |
| Ensure the chair and table are the correct size so that the pupil’s feet are flat on the floor |  |
| Provide furniture that supports the pupils body e.g. a chair with arms |  |
| Consider seating position in the classroom to ensure the pupil is facing what he/she needs to look at |  |
| Keep the furniture in the room constant and teach the pupil explicitly when rearranging the room |  |
| Approach pupil from the front. |  |
| Use visual prompts to demarcate space e.g. coloured tape around desk space |  |
| Use a non slip mat to prevent sliding out of chair or to hold piece of paper on table. |  |
| Weighted lap mat |  |
| Use carpet squares to give the pupil their own space |  |
| Use alternative seating such as bean bags, wobble cushion |  |
| Provide a buddy to support when walking, encourage pupil to use the wall, banister rail and furniture to aid stability |  |
|  |  |
| Use Therabands to do arm pulls while sitting on chair |  |
| Wall pushes. |  |
| Body lifts using arms whilst sitting in chair. |  |
| Body lifts – hanging from a frame (With consideration to H & S) |  |
| Heavy exercise workout, push up, running, marching, squats, jumping. |  |
| Trampoline work out. |  |
| Allow movement breaks (*see C & I intervention package*) |  |
| Give the pupil jobs that involve moving or pushing chairs, wiping down tables etc |  |
| Encourage use of resistant toys: pulling apart popoids, lego, k-nex etc. |  |
| Create a ‘fidget’ box–with elastic bands, squeezy toys, therapy putty etc |  |
| Bunny jumps, side jumps over low bar. |  |
| Running with a heavy rucksack. (With consideration to H & S) |  |
| Catching & throwing heavy balls. |  |
| Pushing / dribbling heavy objects with foot |  |
| Kneading / play dough / stirring activities. |  |
| Gardening, digging, pushing a shopping trolley, stacking chairs, |  |
| Self-massage in Yoga exercises, including hand massage. |  |
| Use wet wipes to support self-care |  |

**Planning a sensory diet**

***Over stimulated***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strategy*** | **🗸**  or **x** |
| Provide a small tent/play hut with soft pillows/beanbag |  |
| Provide a range of activities involving:   * Weight bearing e.g. wheelbarrow walks, chair push ups * Pushing * Heavy work * Carrying |  |

***Under stimulated***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strategy*** | **🗸**  or **x** |
| Provide a range of activities involving:   * Movement * Jumping * Climbing * Swinging   Schedule these activities before carpet/work time to allow the student to be more focus. This may form part of a sensory diet. |  |

***Other considerations***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Strategy*** | **🗸**  or **x** |
| Allow pleasurable sensory activities within the structure of the day |  |
| Use a sensory room to regulate sensory stimulation |  |
| Encourage activities that desensitise or provide stimulation e.g. blowing whistles, straw painting |  |
| Use time out cards to support sensory overload |  |
| Make sound sources clear, to help distinguish |  |

**Planning a classroom for sensory needs**

Checklist of strategies to reduce distractions, taken from:

***Is it sensory or is it behaviour? By Murray-Slutsky and Paris (2005) Published by Hammill Institute on Disabilities Page 104, Table 7.1***

***Key:***

A Auditory

V Visual

O Organisational

OS Other Sensory

**Ceiling Considerations**

* Acoustic ceiling tiles A
* Ceiling height should be less than 12 feet high A

**Flooring**

* Rubberised or resilient tile A
* Carpeting installed over padding A
* Carpeting extends over the bottom of the wall A
* Hallways and adjoining areas are carpeted A
* Area rugs A

**Wall coverings**

* Cork bulletin boards A
* Felt or flannel boards A
* Acoustical or fabric covered wall A
* Window covering A
* Art work on walls V
* Type and amount of pictures hung on wall or from ceilings is kept to a minimum

**Window covering**

* Drapes A
* Artwork on windows A

**Doors and doorways**

* Solid core doors A
* Noise-lock seal, felt doorway lining A
* Draft guard or doors covered A

**Furniture**

* Staggered desks A
* Desk and chair leg bottoms padded or covered A
* Bulletin boards, bookcases, file cabinets placed to break up space A,V
* Study carrels A,V

**Light Fixtures**

* Housing for fluorescent light should be above acoustical tile in ceiling A
* Ballasts must be changed on a regular basis A

**Instructional Methods**

* Instruction occurs away from noise sources: heating, air conditioning vents A
* Background noise is kept to a minimum A
* Task presentations organised with extraneous supplies and work out of sight O,V
* Clean up after each project O,V
* Tasks are presented in manageable parts O,V
* Placement of learning activity is appropriate for the child’s perspective O,V

**Other Sensory Distractions**

* Distracting smells are avoided whenever possible OS
* Temperature of room is maintained at a comfortable level OS