

SENSORY NEEDS CHECKLIST



Every pupil experiences the world through their senses in their own way. Understanding and meeting sensory needs helps reduce stress, improve regulation and create a safe, inclusive environment where everyone can learn and thrive.

Use this checklist to identify what supports may help a pupil.

HOW TO USE

-  Observe the pupil across the day.
-  Tick any needs you notice or that are shared by the pupil.
-  Use the ideas provided to support their comfort and participation.

SENSORY AREA	SIGNS THIS MAY BE A NEED	SUPPORT IDEAS (EXAMPLES)	NOTES 
 VISUAL What we see (light, movement, colour, visuals)	- Covers eyes, squints or looks away - Distracted by movement or clutter - Difficulty in busy or bright spaces - Prefers dim spaces or certain colours	- Reduce visual clutter - Provide natural light where possible - Use calm, low-contrast colours - Offer a quiet space or visual break	☐ _____ _____ _____
 AUDITORY What we hear (sounds, noise, voices)	- Covers ears or avoids noisy places - Startles easily or seeks quiet - Finds it hard to concentrate with noise - Sensitive to specific sounds	- Reduce background noise - Use soft voice and clear instructions - Provide noise-cancelling headphones - Create a quiet area to take breaks	☐ _____ _____ _____
 TACTILE What we touch (textures, clothes, objects)	- Dislikes certain fabrics or labels - Avoids messy play or textures - Seeks touch or pressure - Difficulty with small resources	- Allow preferred clothing - Offer alternative textures - Provide fidget or tactile tools - Use adaptive equipment if needed	☐ _____ _____ _____
 MOVEMENT How we move (balance, need to move, space)	- Fidgets or squirms in seat - Needs movement breaks - Seeks climbing, jumping or spinning - Struggles with sitting still	- Provide movement breaks - Use wobble cushion or stability tools - Allow standing or alternative seating - Offer heavy work activities	☐ _____ _____ _____
 PROPRIOCEPTION Awareness of our body position and strength	- Bumps into things or people - Pushes hard or uses too much force - Seeks deep pressure or strong input - Poor body awareness	- Offer heavy work activities - Provide weighty items (lap pad, blanket) - Use resistance tools (therabands) - Teach body awareness strategies	☐ _____ _____ _____
 VESTIBULAR Our sense of movement and balance	- Loves spinning, swinging or sliding - Seeks movement or is always on the go - Gets dizzy or anxious with movement - Poor balance or coordination	- Provide safe movement opportunities - Use movement breaks and active tasks - Offer balance tools (gym ball, cushion) - Create a consistent routine	☐ _____ _____ _____
 INTEROCEPTION Awareness of internal body signals	- Unaware of hunger, thirst or fatigue - Struggles to describe how they feel - High anxiety or low body awareness - Difficulty recognising needs	- Teach body check-ins - Use visual scales/emotion charts - Encourage regular drink & snack breaks - Build routines for self-care	☐ _____ _____ _____



REMEMBER

-  Sensory needs can change throughout the day.
-  What helps one day may differ the next.
-  Small changes can make a big difference.
-  Ask the pupil what helps – they know best!



CREATE A SENSORY-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

-  Predictable routines and clear expectations
-  Choice and control where possible
-  Safe spaces to regulate and recharge
-  Kindness, understanding and patience



WHEN WE UNDERSTAND SENSORY NEEDS,
WE REMOVE BARRIERS AND BUILD BELONGING.



Different, not less.
Every pupil. Every day.
Every opportunity.