








Sensory environment checklist

This sensory checklist is to help practitioners to assess and create an environment that enables the participation of pupils with autism. It does not cover all aspects, but gives ideas on the ways in which a setting might be altered if pupils experience sensory processing difficulties and find it hard or very anxiety-provoking to tolerate certain sensations or situations.

Sense	Good practice and evidence to look for	Current situation	Action needed
General sensory issues	Sensory profiles for individual pupils are completed and used to identify strategies to meet their sensory needs. Practitioners should have agreed strategies in place if a pupil is experiencing sensory overload e.g. there is a quiet room or space available.		
Visual 	Lighting is suitable for pupils with autism e.g. fluorescent lights are regularly checked as flickering lights can be very disturbing The room is orderly and not cluttered so that pupils can make sense of the environment e.g. materials and resources are clearly labelled with a picture or symbol.		
Taste 	Practitioners are aware of individual differences in pupils's taste and make adjustments e.g. adapting cooking activities. Practitioners allow opportunities for pupils to gradually taste lots of different things to aid sense development.		
Sound 	Sounds from room equipment are kept to a minimum e.g. TVs, videos, audio systems, lights and computers are switched off when not in use to avoid a mains hum. Strategies are in place to reduce noise e.g. using playmats on hard floors, and loud/unexpected noises are avoided where possible.		
Smell 	Smells from outside, or in a setting, are monitored and kept to a minimum e.g. shut a window to stop unwanted smells or use unscented materials in activities Practitioners are aware that pupils may react to the smell of others e.g. staff deodorant or perfume.		

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Touch 	Practitioners are aware of individual differences in pupils's touch and make adjustments e.g. using different role play clothes or placing pupils at the front/back of a line. Practitioners allow opportunities for pupils to gradually experience new textures e.g. use a spoon, straw or plastic gloves to explore materials.		
Balance 	Practitioners encourage activities which develop balance e.g. swing, roundabout, rocking horse, see-saw, dancing. Practitioners break down physical activities into small steps and use visual cues e.g. when to stop in movement activities.		
Body awareness 	There is sufficient space for pupils to sit and move around comfortably. Practitioners encourage activities which develop body awareness and fine motor skills e.g. parachute games and threading beads.		