

# Sensory Needs Toolkit

**The Graduated Response to Supporting  
Sensory Needs in Schools**



# Purpose of This Toolkit



Dear colleagues, families and partners,

Across Tameside, we remain committed to continually strengthening the way we identify and respond to children's needs. Through ongoing conversations with families, schools and professionals, it has become increasingly clear that sensory needs represent one of the greatest challenges in our settings – and also one of the most misunderstood areas of practice.

Sensory differences can significantly affect a child's learning, behaviour and emotional wellbeing. When these needs are not recognised early, children can feel overwhelmed, dysregulated or misunderstood, and what may appear as 'behaviour' is often a communication of discomfort, anxiety or difficulty managing their environment. By improving shared understanding and consistency, we can ensure that children receive the right support at the right time.

This Sensory Needs Toolkit has been developed as part of our ongoing work to promote clarity, consistency and early intervention across Tameside. It is designed to support schools, families and professionals to better understand sensory needs and respond to them using a clear graduated approach. Our aim is to build shared language, promote earlier identification and strengthen universal sensory-friendly practice across all settings.

We are especially grateful to the Department for Education for the Inclusion Support Funding, which has enabled us to progress this work at pace and develop comprehensive, evidence-informed guidance that will make a meaningful difference to children and young people.

The toolkit:

- Encourages early and accurate identification
- Offers practical strategies that can be implemented immediately
- Provides clear pathways from universal to targeted and specialist support
- Strengthens communication between home, school and services

Special thanks go to Sadie Charlton from SensoryPie, whose expertise as a Specialist Sensory Occupational Therapist, alongside her close collaboration with ISCAN and colleagues across Tameside, has been central to the development of this toolkit. Her insight, professional knowledge and neuro-affirming approach have shaped both the content and direction of this work. We are equally grateful to Anne-Marie Murray, SEND Project Officer, whose dedication and coordination have ensured the project remained responsive, coherent and rooted in local need.

We also extend heartfelt thanks to the schools, parents and carers who contributed to the information-gathering process. Their reflections and lived experiences of supporting children and young people with sensory needs have been invaluable in ensuring this work is grounded in real-world experience and focused on what will make the greatest difference.

This toolkit represents an important step in our commitment to placing children and families at the heart of our approach. By strengthening processes, building shared understanding and embedding consistent practice, we aim to ensure earlier, more supportive intervention for every child with sensory needs across Tameside.

**Hilary Cook**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hilary Cook".

**Head of Send  
Tameside MBC**



# Using The Sensory Needs Toolkit



## WHAT THIS TOOLKIT IS FOR

**This toolkit is intended to:**

- ✔ Support schools and settings to recognise when sensory experiences may be impacting a child's learning, behaviour or wellbeing.
- ✔ Provide practical guidance on how to adapt environments, routines and expectations to better support regulation
- ✔ Promote consistent practice across settings using a shared language and graduated response.
- ✔ Support children with and without diagnoses by focusing on need rather than labels

## WHAT THIS TOOLKIT IS NOT

**This toolkit:**

- ✗ Is not a diagnostic or assessment tool
- ✗ Does not replace specialist assessment or advice
- ✗ Is not a requirement for a specific diagnosis
- ✗ Is not intended to be used solely as evidence for referral or statutory processes

Instead, it is a practice guide to support understanding, reflection and early action.

## WHO THIS TOOLKIT IS FOR

**This toolkit can be used by:**

- School staff (teachers, teaching assistants, SENCOs, pastoral and leadership teams)
- Parents and carers
- Professionals supporting children and young people across:  
education  
health  
and community settings
- And Young people who wish to explore their own sensory needs!



**Because we all have senses, sensory experiences are universal. This toolkit is therefore designed for use with all children and young people, not only those with identified SEND.**

## HOW & WHEN TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

**This toolkit follows a graduated response to supporting sensory needs..**

### ① UNIVERSAL

Sensory-friendly environments and predictable routines for all children



### ② TARGETED

structured support for children who need additional help



### ③ SPECIALIST

guidance on when and how to escalate for further support

As part of this graduated approach, there is an expectation that Universal support (Step 1) is explored and embedded before moving on to targeted sensory screening or onwards referral.

The Universal tools in this toolkit can be used at any time to reflect on practice and improve accessibility for all children. (See flow chart on the next page.)



# HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

START  
HERE

## ① SENSORY IS UNIVERSAL

All children experience the world through their senses



PAGE 4-10

## ① UNIVERSAL SUPPORTS

Sensory friendly environments, routines, and predictability for all children.

PAGE 11



## WHEN UNIVERSAL ISN'T ENOUGH

Some children may need additional targeted support.



PAGE 12

## ② TARGETED SUPPORT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Targeted sensory support for primary aged children



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## ② TARGETED SUPPORT SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Targeted sensory support for secondary aged young people

PAGE 16



## ③ REVIEW PROGRESS & NEXT STEPS

Monitor progress, review strategies and decide what support is needed next.



PAGE 20

## ④ SIGNPOSTING & FURTHER SUPPORT PAGE 22

## Every moment of every day, we are using our senses.

We use our senses to notice what is happening around us and inside our bodies. This sensory information helps us understand the world, navigate our environment, and make sense of what is going on. Sensory processing is how the body and brain notice, organise and respond to this information. Our senses do not work in isolation- we use all of our senses together to build a picture of our surroundings, to work out what is happening, to judge how safe or manageable a situation feels, and to decide how to respond.

This information is constantly being pieced together to support everyday actions - whether that is getting dressed in the morning, moving around a busy space, playing, working, or engaging in learning.



## BECAUSE WE ALL HAVE SENSES, SENSORY EXPERIENCES AFFECT EVERYONE!

Sensory input can be experienced differently depending on a range of factors, including:

- a person's nervous system
- the environment they are in
- their stress levels
- their routines
- and what their previous experiences have taught them to expect.



These differences in sensory experience can influence how alert, comfortable or overwhelmed someone feels, and can affect .

- attention
- behaviour
- learning
- emotional wellbeing
- and participation in everyday activities



Understanding sensory experiences can help us to see behaviour through a sensory lens and recognise when changes to the environment, routines or expectations may be helpful.

# THE 8 SENSORY SYSTEMS



1

**These sensory systems work together and are influenced by the environment.**

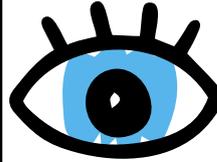
We experience the world through multiple sensory systems. These systems work together to help us understand what is happening around us and inside our bodies. Below is a brief overview of the eight sensory systems.

## TACTILE



This is our **sense of touch**. It helps us notice how things feel on our skin - such as clothing, textures, temperature, and physical contact with others.

## VISUAL



This is how we make **sense of what we see**. It helps us notice light, movement, colour, facial expressions, and how busy or cluttered an environment feels.

## AUDITORY



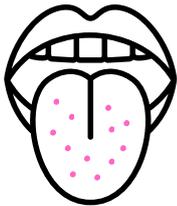
This is our **sense of sound**. It helps us process voices, background noise, sudden sounds, and understand spoken information.

## OLFACTORY



This is our **sense of smell**. It helps us notice scents in the environment, which can strongly affect comfort, memory, and emotional responses.

## GUSTATORY



This is our **sense of taste**. It influences food preferences, tolerance of different flavours and textures, and how safe or enjoyable eating feels.

## VESTIBULAR



This **system tells us about movement and balance**. It helps us know if we are moving, how fast we are moving, and where our head and body are in space.

## PROPRIOCEPTION



This is our **sense of body position/awareness & force**. This system gives feedback from our muscles and joints. It helps us judge how much pressure to use, how hard to push or pull, and where our body is without needing to look.

## INTEROCEPTION



This system helps us **notice what is happening inside our body**. It tells us when we are hungry, thirsty, tired, need the toilet, or experiencing big emotions.

Click [HERE](#) to view ISCAN online module on Sensory Processing!

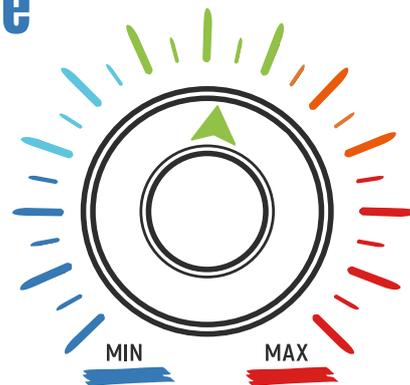
# Sensory Modulation

## The “Volume Dial” of Daily Life

We all notice what’s happening around us and inside our bodies - but not at the same levels.

This includes:

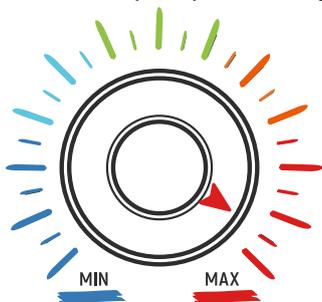
- sounds, movement, touch, light, smells and tastes
- internal body signals such as hunger, thirst, needing the toilet, or feeling anxious



You can think of this like a volume dial.

### WHEN THE SENSORY VOLUME IS TURNED UP

For some people, everyday sensory experiences are noticed very quickly and very strongly.



This can mean:

- **sounds feel uncomfortably loud**
- **busy movement feels unsettling**
- **certain touch or tactile sensations are hard to ignore**
- **body sensations feel intense or distracting**

Because these signals are noticed early, they can feel overwhelming - especially in busy or unpredictable environments.

Some frameworks describe this as **sensory sensitive** or **over-responsive**.

### WHEN THE SENSORY VOLUME IS TURNED DOWN

For other people, everyday sensory experiences are *quieter* or *less noticeable* at first.

This does not mean the body isn’t receiving the information.

It means the signal may not stand out as important until it becomes:

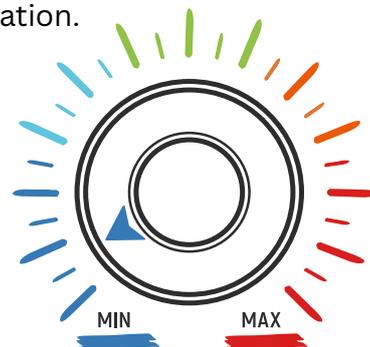
**stronger**

**more obvious**

**or urgent**

This can look like:

- **not noticing hunger or toileting needs until they feel urgent**
- **seeming unbothered by noise, then suddenly finding it too much**
- **needing stronger movement, pressure, or sound to feel organised**
- **seeking out extra sensory input and not knowing the ‘limit’ until its too late eg: spinning for intense stimulation and then later struggling to wind down**



When the “volume” is low, it can be harder to work out what deserves attention because the cues are less clear.

Some frameworks describe this as **under-responsive**, **hypo-responsive** or **sensory seeking**

# Sensory Modulation

## The “Volume Dial” of Daily Life



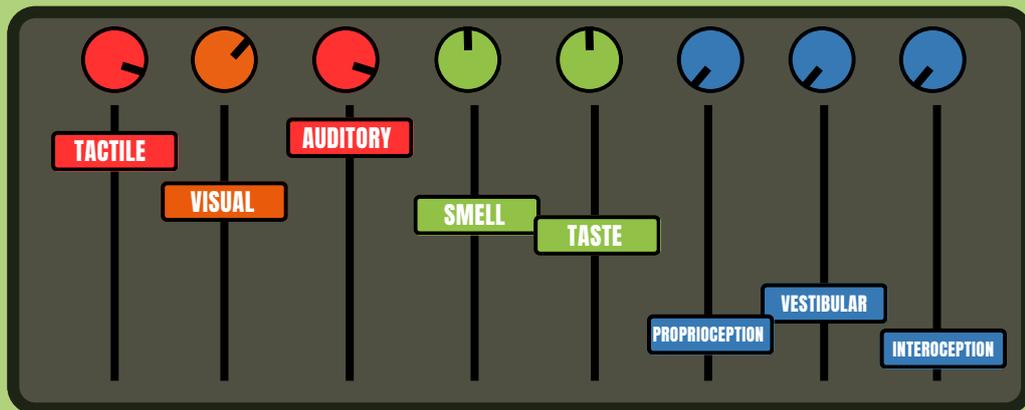
### WHY REACTIONS CAN LOOK SUDDEN

Sensory experiences are not always fixed. How strong they feel can change depending on:



### SENSORY MODULATION ACROSS DIFFERENT SENSES

There isn't just one sensory “volume” dial. Each sensory system has its own level, a bit like the separate dials on a sound mixer.



This means:

- one sense might be turned up, while another is turned down
- a child might notice sounds strongly but miss body signals
- a child might seek lots of movement but find touch uncomfortable

These patterns are not inconsistent .. they simply reflect different sensory systems being set at different levels.

# Sensory Regulation

## How we respond to sensory input



People respond to sensory input in different ways. Some people respond actively, others respond more passively. These are not labels, and they are not fixed traits. They describe how a nervous system responds in that moment.

### ACTIVE RESPONSES

Some people actively try to change their sensory experience.

**Strategy:** Changes environment to suit self

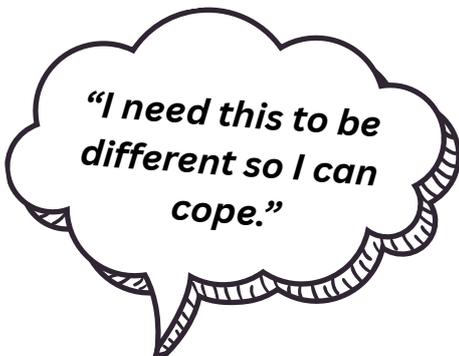
**Primary Goal:** Physical/ Sensory Regulation

**This might look like:**

- Seeking more input (movement, chewing, fidgeting)
- Avoiding or escaping sensory input (leaving a busy area/ hiding)
- Controlling the environment (telling others to be quiet, covering hands over ears, using ear defenders)
- Trying to make sensory input more predictable (making their own repetitive noises to drown out unpredictable noise)

**Internal cost:** Often misunderstood by others or seen as 'behaviour'

**Active responses are the body's way of saying...**



### PASSIVE RESPONSES

Other people respond more passively

**Strategy:** Changes *self* to suit environment

**Primary Goal:** Social acceptance / safety

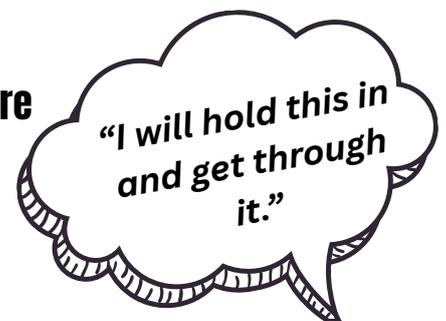
**This might look like:**

- Managing sensory input internally without showing outward signs
- Appearing quiet, compliant or "coping"
- Working hard to hide discomfort or distress
- Not seeking help or using supports, even when things feel difficult

This is sometimes described as masking - where a person suppresses outward responses in order to get through a situation that feels **unsafe** or **unpredictable**.

**Internal cost:** Often misunderstood by others or seen as 'fine'. Emotional exhaustion / overwhelm / anxiety

**Passive responses are the body's way of saying...**



# Sensory Regulation

## How we respond to sensory input



### WHY PEOPLE RESPOND DIFFERENTLY

Whether someone responds actively or passively is influenced by:

**their past experiences**

**whether their attempts to change things have been successful**

**how safe or predictable the environment feels**

**what has worked for them before**

Over time, people tend to repeat responses that have helped them cope in the past, because at some point those responses supported safety or regulation- even if they now create challenges.

The brain does this because it is constantly preparing for what it expects will happen next, using previous experiences to guide those expectations.

When environments feel familiar and predictable, sensory systems are more likely to stay balanced.

When environments feel uncertain, unpredictable or overwhelming, some sensory systems may become more alert, while others may become less responsive.

As a result, sensory responses are not always fixed traits. They can change across different environments, routines and life experiences.

## Why predictability matters for sensory regulation

Sensory experiences are not just shaped by what is happening, but also by whether it is expected. When the body knows what is coming next, it can prepare. When things happen unexpectedly, the nervous system has to work harder to respond. These unexpected moments are sometimes referred to as “*sensory surprises*”



# What do we mean by “sensory surprises”?



A sensory surprise does not have to be dramatic. It is not a sudden shock or a big event, or a clown jumping out of the classroom cupboard!

It is any sensory input that happens without warning, without clarity, or without a clear end point.

## Sensory surprises can include:

- ▶ A chair scraping loudly across the floor
- ▶ A sudden change in tone or volume of voice
- ▶ An unexpected transition or change to the plan
- ▶ Noise starting or stopping abruptly
- ▶ Entering a space that feels busier or louder than expected

For some children, these small, everyday ‘surprises’ can make sensory input feel much more intense or harder to manage.



## Example: the neighbour drilling

Imagine it’s a peaceful Sunday morning..and your neighbour suddenly starts drilling & banging next door. The sound is loud and irritating, but what makes it especially difficult is not knowing:

- ▶ **When it will start again**
- ▶ **How long it will last**
- ▶ **When it will finally stop**

**Your body stays alert and reactive because it cannot predict what is coming next.**

## Now imagine you are the one doing the drilling.

The sound may be louder, but it feels more manageable because you:

- ▶ **Know exactly when it will start**
- ▶ **Know when it will stop**
- ▶ **Are in control of the noise**

**The sensory input itself has not changed -what has changed is that the body knows what is *coming* and *when it will end*.**

## How this links to children and everyday environments

For children, environments such as schools, homes and community settings can be full of sensory surprises. When routines change, transitions are unclear, or expectations are unpredictable, the nervous system has to stay more alert. This can make sensory input feel louder, more intense, or harder to cope with.

Over time, if environments feel unpredictable, the body may stay on high alert - or switch to coping strategies such as seeking control, avoiding situations, or masking distress. This is where we might see children who appeared fine for months or years, and then suddenly are unable to access school.

**Predictability helps the nervous system feel safer, calmer and more able to cope.**

# 1

# UNIVERSAL SUPPORTS



**Most sensory needs can be supported through universal practice.**

Universal sensory support focuses on the environment, routines and structure that children experience every day. When these are consistent, predictable and sensory-considerate, they support regulation, attention and participation for all children.

Children experience the same environments very differently. A whole-school approach recognises this and avoids relying on individual strategies alone. Instead, it focuses on making environments feel reliable, understandable and easier for every nervous system to manage.

When predictability and consistency are built into everyday practice, sensory surprises are reduced, regulation is supported, and fewer children require targeted or specialist support later on.

**For this reason, universal tools should always be used before moving to targeted sensory screening or individualised support.**



## TOOLS TO DOWNLOAD

### PREDICTABILITY WINS: A UNIVERSAL SENSORY SUPPORT HANDOUT



[DOWNLOAD](#)

This handout provides practical, everyday examples of how schools can increase predictability and consistency across the day for all children. It focuses on small, realistic adjustments that reduce sensory surprises and help environments feel more reliable and easier for the nervous system to manage.

### SENSORY-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTS: TOP TIPS



Practical guidance for creating calmer, more predictable environments.

[PRIMARY SCHOOL TOP TIPS](#)

[SECONDARY SCHOOL TOP TIPS](#)



### SENSORY ENVIRONMENT AUDIT TOOL

A structured tool to reflect on: physical environments, routines and transitions and sensory load across the day



[PRIMARY AUDIT TOOL](#)

[SECONDARY AUDIT TOOL](#)



# WHEN UNIVERSAL ISNT ENOUGH

This page helps you decide when a child may need targeted sensory support - not a diagnosis, and not a referral.

Universal sensory supports benefit most children. Some children need more personalised, predictable support to fully access learning and feel safe in school.

## INDICATORS TO CONSIDER TARGETED SUPPORT

### LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT

- Reduced engagement with learning
- Difficulty sustaining attention or effort
- Increasing work avoidance or shutdown

### REGULATION & EMOTIONAL LOAD

- Increased distress or emotional dysregulation
- Anxiety linked to environments, routines or transitions
- Behaviour that escalates despite consistent universal strategies

### COPING & SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

- Masking during the school day with emotional release at home
- Attendance issues, lateness or avoidance
- Frequent need to leave the classroom or seek adult support



### What this tells us...

Universal supports are in place, but they are not yet meeting this child's individual sensory needs. This child may need support that is more specific, more predictable and more responsive to how their body experiences the school environment.

## Move to Targeted Support

PRIMARY SCHOOL  
Targeted Support

SECONDARY SCHOOL  
Targeted Support



# 2

# Targeted Support Primary Schools



Targeted sensory support is used when universal strategies are in place but are not enough for a particular child. It helps adults understand how this child experiences their environment and respond more precisely.

## TARGETED SUPPORT IS:

- ✓ Time-limited
- ✓ Child-Specific
- ✓ Predictable & Consistent
- ✓ Trialled, reviewed and adapted

## TARGETED SUPPORT IS NOT:

- ✗ A diagnosis
- ✗ A referral route
- ✗ A behaviour management plan
- ✗ A long list of strategies

Targeted support works best when it is viewed as a curious enquiry, not a one-off intervention



2



# Targeted Support Primary Schools



## TOOLS TO DOWNLOAD



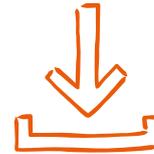
### STEP 1: OBSERVE & UNDERSTAND

**Use this well by:**

- Observing across different times of day, not just during difficulty
- Noticing patterns linked to environment, demand and transitions
- Avoiding assumptions about motivation or intent

This step is about patterns, not proving a problem.

DOWNLOAD



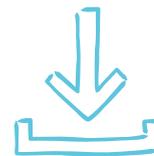
[Sensory  
Observation &  
Screening Toolkit  
Primary](#)

### STEP 2: LISTEN - HEAR THE CHILDS VOICE

**Use this well by:**

- Completing when the child is calm and regulated
- Accepting non-verbal responses (drawing, choosing, pointing)
- Valuing what helps as much as what is hard

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[Voice of the Child  
Worksheet  
Primary](#)

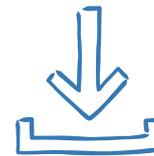
### STEP 3: IDENTIFY SUPPORT STRATEGIES

**Use this well by:**

- Choosing a small number of strategies linked to observed need
- Prioritising predictability and prevention, not crisis response
- Matching strategies to school routines, not just “tools”

**Remember:** Too many strategies at once makes it harder to know what is helping.

DOWNLOAD



[Sensory Strategies  
Library  
Primary](#)

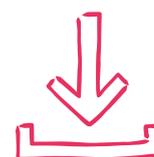
### STEP 4: PLAN - CREATE A SHARED PLAN

**Use this well by:**

- Writing in plain language all staff can follow
- Being specific about when and how strategies are used
- Sharing with all key adults and families

Consistency matters more than perfection.

DOWNLOAD



[1-Page Sensory  
Passport  
Primary](#)

### SENDCO GUIDANCE

**Use this well by:**

- Following the step-by-step guidance to move from identification to implementation
- Working collaboratively with parents, teachers and the child
- Focusing on a small number of agreed priorities
- Embedding strategies consistently before reviewing impact

DOWNLOAD



[SENDCo guidance  
document  
Primary](#)

# 2

# Targeted Support Primary Schools



## Common pitfalls at Targeted level

- Trialling too many strategies at once
- Changing approaches before patterns emerge
- Expecting immediate behaviour change
- Using targeted support only during moments of distress
- Delaying sensory support while waiting for assessment or diagnostic outcomes, rather than responding to the child's current needs



## KEY REMINDERS FOR PRIMARY SETTINGS



- Targeted support should be trialled for 6–8 weeks with consistent implementation across the school day.
- The SENDCo oversees the process, but day-to-day consistency relies on class teachers and teaching assistants using shared approaches.
- Small inconsistencies across the day and week can significantly increase sensory load and emotional stress for children.



Once the above steps have been consistently implemented for 6-8 weeks, proceed to...

## 3 REVIEW PROGRESS & NEXT STEPS

Monitor progress, review strategies and decide what support is needed next.

# 2

# Targeted Support Secondary Schools



- In secondary settings, sensory needs often present through behaviour, avoidance, or emotional overwhelm rather than overt distress.
- This pathway supports pastoral, SEND and teaching staff to pause, interpret and personalise support before difficulties escalate.
- This pathway does not replace behaviour policies. It helps staff understand why behaviour may be happening and how to reduce escalation.

## TARGETED SUPPORT IS:

- ✓ Time-limited
- ✓ Child-Specific
- ✓ Predictable & Consistent
- ✓ Trialled, reviewed and adapted over time

## TARGETED SUPPORT IS NOT:

- ✗ A diagnosis
- ✗ A referral route
- ✗ A behaviour management plan
- ✗ A long or reactive list of strategies

## Behaviour-Linked Sensory Indicators

### What is often labelled as behaviour

- Walking out of lessons
- Refusal to enter classrooms
- Swearing, shouting or “defiance”
- Avoidance of certain subjects or teachers
- Lateness between lessons

### What might actually be sensory or regulation-based

- Overwhelm from noise, movement or crowding
- Nervous system overload during transitions
- Loss of predictability between lessons
- Accumulated stress across the school day
- Shutdown, flight or fight responses

[Click Here for](#)

[Behaviour-linked  
Sensory Indicators](#)

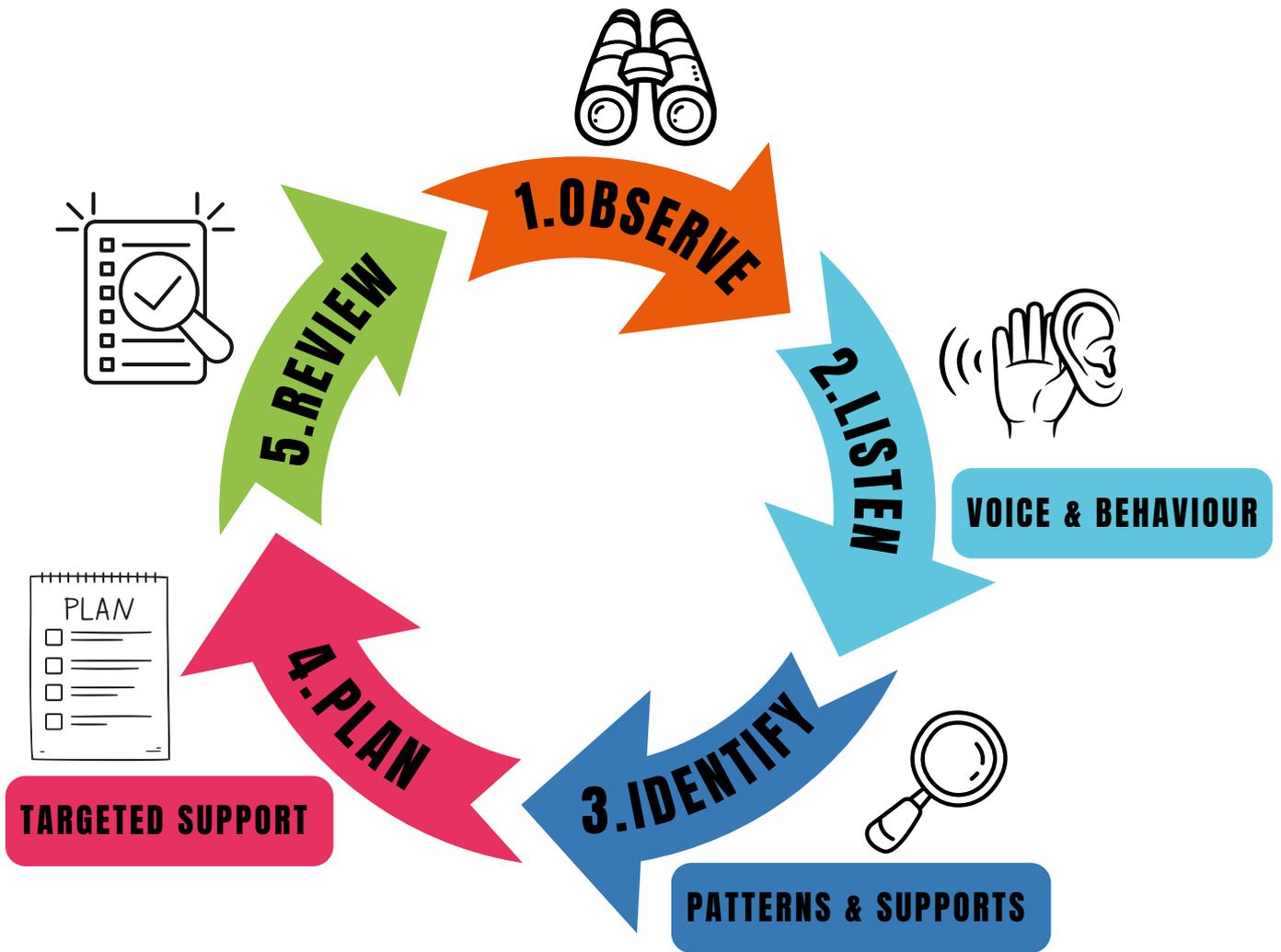


2

# Targeted Support Secondary Schools



Targeted support works best when it is viewed as a curious enquiry, not a one-off intervention



2



# Targeted Support Secondary Schools



## TOOLS TO DOWNLOAD



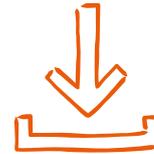
### STEP 1: OBSERVE & UNDERSTAND

**Use this well by:**

- Observing across multiple subjects and transitions
- The young person themselves completing this screening checklist
- Considering sensory load, social demand and cognitive demand together

**Secondary needs are often cumulative, not moment-specific.**

DOWNLOAD



**Sensory  
Observation &  
Screening Toolkit  
Secondary**

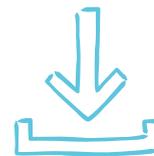
### STEP 2: LISTEN - VOICE OF THE YOUNG PERSON

**Use this well by:**

- Completing with a trusted adult (mentor, HOY, SENDCo)
- Offering choice: written, visual, scaled or discussion-based
- Asking what helps before asking what's hard

**Remember: Many young people will minimise difficulty in school.  
Behaviour and attendance patterns often speak louder than words.**

DOWNLOAD



**My Sensory Profile  
Worksheet  
Secondary**

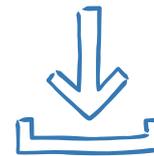
### STEP 3: IDENTIFY PATTERNS & SUPPORT STRATEGIES

**Use this well by:**

- Selecting 2-4 strategies maximum
- Matching strategies to specific contexts (e.g. corridors, lessons, exams)
- Prioritising prevention, not crisis response

**More strategies does not mean better support.  
Precision/consistency matters more than volume.**

DOWNLOAD



**Sensory Strategies  
Library  
Secondary**

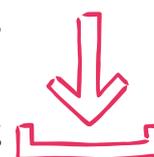
### STEP 4: PLAN - CREATE A SHARED PLAN

**Use this well by:**

- Writing for all staff, not just SEND
- Being explicit about: What helps / When support is needed/ What makes things worse
- Sharing with pastoral and teaching teams consistently

**A shared plan reduces mixed messages and increases felt safety for young people.**

DOWNLOAD



**1-Page Sensory  
Passport  
Secondary**

### IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

**Use this well by:**

- Following the step-by-step guidance to move from identification to implementation
- Working collaboratively with parents, teachers and the young person
- Focusing on a small number of agreed priorities
- Embedding strategies consistently before reviewing impact

DOWNLOAD



**Guidance for  
Heads of Year,  
Mentors & SENDCos**

# 2

# Targeted Support Secondary Schools



## Common pitfalls at Targeted level

- Relying on sanctions, detentions or removals before exploring sensory or regulation needs
- Trialling too many strategies at once across different subjects or staff
- Changing approaches before patterns have had time to emerge
- Expecting immediate compliance or behaviour change in high-pressure environments
- Using targeted support only during moments of crisis or escalation
- Assuming older pupils should be able to “cope” without adjustments
- Inconsistent implementation across subjects, lessons or staff teams
- Delaying sensory support while waiting for assessment or diagnostic outcomes, rather than responding to the child’s current needs



## KEY REMINDERS FOR SECONDARY SETTINGS



- Targeted support should be trialled for 6–8 weeks with consistent implementation across the school day.
- The SENDCo / SEND team oversees the process, but day-to-day consistency relies on Heads of Year, mentors and teaching staff using shared approaches.
- Small inconsistencies across multiple lessons can significantly increase sensory load and emotional stress for young people.



Once the above steps have been consistently implemented for 6-8 weeks, proceed to...

## 3 REVIEW PROGRESS & NEXT STEPS

Monitor progress, review strategies and decide what support is needed next.

3



# REVIEW PROGRESS & NEXT STEPS

**THIS STAGE HELPS SCHOOLS REFLECT ON WHAT HAS BEEN TRIED, WHAT IMPACT IT HAS HAD, AND WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN NEXT - WITHOUT STARTING AGAIN.**

## WHY THIS STAGE MATTERS

Targeted sensory support is only effective when it is reviewed thoughtfully. This stage supports schools to make evidence-led decisions, build on what they know, and avoid repeating cycles of trial and abandonment.

## WHEN REVIEWING TARGETED SUPPORT, CONSIDER:

- The specific strategies that were trialed
- Where and when they were used across the school day
- Consistency of implementation across adults and settings
- The duration of the trial (typically 6–8 weeks)
- Feedback from the child or young person
- Feedback from parents or carers

**Review should focus on patterns over time, not individual incidents.**

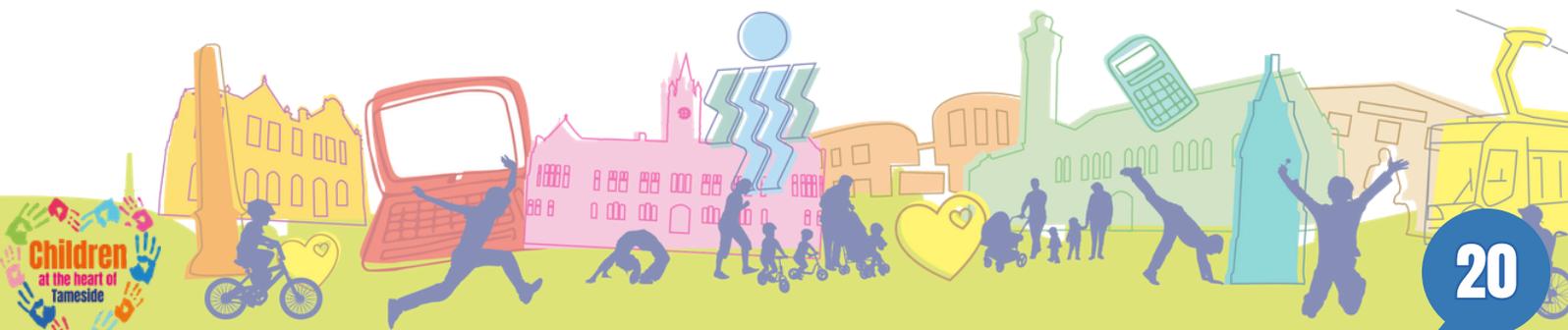


## PROGRESS MAY LOOK LIKE:

- Reduced escalation or quicker recovery after stress
- Increased willingness to enter lessons or remain in class
- Improved attendance, punctuality or engagement at key times
- Greater emotional safety or trust with adults
- Improved access to learning at any point in the day

**Progress shouldn't be focused on fewer "behaviours."**

**Progress is increased capacity, regulation and participation.**



# 3

# REVIEW PROGRESS & NEXT STEPS



THIS STAGE HELPS SCHOOLS REFLECT ON WHAT HAS BEEN TRIED, WHAT IMPACT IT HAS HAD, AND WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN NEXT - WITHOUT STARTING AGAIN.

## IF PROGRESS IS LIMITED, CONSIDER ADJUSTING:

- **Consistency** – are strategies being used reliably by all staff?
- **Timing** – are supports in place before pressure points?
- **Match** – do strategies still align with the child’s sensory needs?
- **Volume** – are too many strategies being used at once?
- **Environment** – are there sensory barriers still unaddressed?

Adjusting support is not failure - it is part of the process.

DOWNLOAD



## REMEMBER!

### Sensory strategies are supports, not treatments.

A child or young person may remain over-responsive or under-responsive to certain sensory input despite well-matched strategies. This does not mean the support has failed.

#### When reviewing impact, consider:

- Is the child recovering more quickly?
- Are transitions or demands more manageable?
- Is distress reduced, even if sensitivity remains?

Escalation should be based on impact and access to learning, not the presence of sensory sensitivity alone.

## THIS REVIEW PROCESS SUPPORTS:

- SEN Support reviews
- Evidence-led decision making
- Clear escalation or de-escalation decisions
- Reducing repeated “starting again” cycles

Reviewing well allows schools to move forward with confidence - whether that means refining support, continuing targeted strategies, or considering next steps



## 4 SIGNPOSTING & FURTHER SUPPORT



# 4



# Signposting & Further Support

## SUPPORTING THE CHILD BEYOND THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit supports schools to understand and respond to sensory needs at Universal and Targeted levels. Where daily challenges remain, that impact on functional difficulties, further support may be helpful.

### YOU MAY CONSIDER FURTHER SUPPORT WHEN:

- Targeted strategies have been implemented consistently for 6–8 weeks
- Adjustments have been reviewed and refined
- Sensory needs continue to significantly impact:
  - Access to learning
  - Emotional wellbeing
  - Attendance or participation
- The child or family continue to report high levels of distress

**Needing further support does not mean targeted support has failed. It means the child may need additional layers of help around them.**

### POSSIBLE SOURCES OF FURTHER SUPPORT MAY INCLUDE:

#### EDUCATION-BASED SUPPORT



- SEN Support reviews and graduated response discussions
- Educational Psychology consultation (where available)
- Inclusion or advisory services

#### HEALTH AND WELLBEING SUPPORT



- Advice from health professionals involved with the child
- Support around anxiety, emotional wellbeing or sleep
- ISCAN services as required

#### FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT



- Parent and carer support services
- Voluntary or community-based organisations
- Support groups or training opportunities
- Barnardos navigators

