

Sensory Strategies Library Primary Schools



This guide is designed to be used alongside the **Sensory Observation & Screening Toolkit – Primary**.

It is not intended to be read from start to finish.

Instead, use it to select and trial strategies linked to the child's identified priority needs.

STEP 1

Return to Your 2-3 Priority Targets

Before selecting strategies, review:

- Which sensory systems were identified as priorities
- Which part of the day feels most challenging
- What impact this has on learning, regulation or independence

Focus only on the 2–3 highest impact areas.

Avoid trying to change everything at once.

STEP 2

Match Strategies to the Priority Area

Each section of this guide is organised by sensory system and context. Within each system you will find:

- Strategies for school
- Strategies for home
- Context-specific suggestions (e.g. transitions, lunchtime, after school)

Select 1–2 strategies to trial first.

Small, consistent environmental adjustments are more effective than multiple changes introduced at once.

STEP 3

Trial, Observe, Adjust

When introducing a strategy:

- Be consistent
- Introduce it predictably
- Allow time for the child to adjust
- Observe what changes

Improvement may look like:

- Reduced distress
- Faster recovery
- Increased participation
- Greater independence
- Fewer incidents during the targeted part of the day

STEP 4

Review Before Adding More

Supporting one high-impact sensory need can improve regulation across the day.

Once progress is seen, you may choose to introduce another priority area.

Avoid layering multiple new strategies simultaneously.

CONTENTS

Click the Tameside logo to
return to this page!

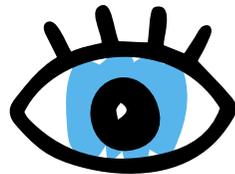


IMPORTANT REMINDER!

- ! Sensory systems work together
- ! Needs may increase with fatigue, stress or unpredictability
- ! Strategies should reduce environmental demand rather than increase expectations
- ! **Adult consistency** is often the most powerful support
- ! Regulation improves when the environment becomes more predictable, manageable and supportive of the child's sensory profile.



TACTILE



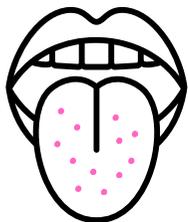
VISUAL



AUDITORY



OLFACTORY



GUSTATORY



VESTIBULAR



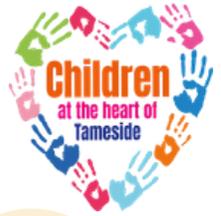
PROPRIOCEPTION



INTEROCEPTION



Over-Responsive / Sensitive to TACTILE input



Use this section if tactile needs were identified as a priority in the screening checklist.



SCHOOL

-  *Becomes distressed when accidentally bumped or touched by others*
Seat with increased personal space; avoid high-traffic areas; teach peers to use visual signals instead of touch.
- 
-  *Finds lining up, carpet time or group work difficult due to close proximity*
Use floor markers or visual spacing cues; allow edge seating or end-of-line position.
- 
-  *Avoids messy play (paint, glue, sand, food textures)*
Offer tools (brushes, gloves, scoops) and gradual exposure; do not force direct contact. Provide towel or wipes for hands.
- 
-  *Becomes upset if hands feel dirty or sticky*
Provide predictable access to wipes or handwashing; pre-warn before tactile activities.
- 
-  *Finds certain clothing or uniform uncomfortable (labels, seams, socks)*
Allow reasonable adjustments (remove labels, allow alternative uniform options).
- 
-  *Reacts strongly to light touch from peers*
Teach peers about personal space; use visual prompts instead of tapping shoulder.
- 



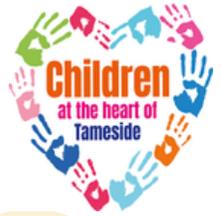
HOME

-  *Appears dysregulated after busy or physical parts of the day*
Build in calming tactile input after busy periods (deep pressure, firm blanket wrap, weighted blanket).
- 
-  *Becomes distressed during dressing or undressing*
Use a consistent, step-by-step dressing routine; allow extra time; minimise fabric changes; give deep pressure to body parts in advance.
- 
-  *Difficulty brushing teeth*
Trial different toothbrush types; introduce gradually; use visual countdown for predictability; 'wake up' the mouth by encouraging child to rub gums before introducing tooth brush.
- 
-  *Difficulty getting in or out of the shower – drying*
Maintain consistent water temperature; use firm towel pressure rather than light rubbing. Make sure environment is warm when coming out of bath/shower
- 
-  *Dislikes having hair brushed / cut*
Use firm, slow pressure; give clear warnings before touch; allow control where possible. De-sensitise scalp by 'waking up' first - firm head touch.
- 
-  *Difficulty cutting nails*
Schedule at calm times; use visual timer; provide deep pressure beforehand.
- 
-  *Avoids certain food textures or dislikes food touching*
Separate foods on plate; introduce new textures gradually without pressure.
- 
-  *Becomes upset by unexpected touch from siblings or adults*
Give verbal warning before physical contact; establish household "ask before touch" rule.
- 



Under-Responsive to TACTILE input

Use this section if tactile needs were identified as a priority in the screening checklist.



SCHOOL

-  *Does not notice when hands, face or clothes are dirty*
 **Build routine hygiene check-ins (before lunch, after play).**
-  *Appears unaware of bumps, knocks or minor injuries*
 **Teach visual body-check routine; encourage reporting small injuries.**
-  *Touches objects, people or surfaces frequently*
 **Provide structured tactile input (putty, textured tools) rather than incidental touching. Direct busy hands to sensory tools.**
-  *Struggles with personal boundaries and may touch others without noticing*
 **Explicitly teach personal space using visual markers and modelling. Direct busy hands to sensory tools.**
-  *Does not notice wet clothes, food on skin, or sticky hands*
 **Schedule regular sensory self-check prompts.**
-  *Does not seem to notice when clothes are twisted or inside out*
 **Build dressing mirror-check routine/ use visuals.**



HOME

-  *Messy eating without awareness of food on face or hands*
 **Provide visual mirror check after meals; teach wipe routine.**
-  *Does not notice when clothes are twisted, inside out or uncomfortable*
 **Use visual checklist during dressing.**
-  *High tolerance for hot or cold water*
 **Adults monitor water temperature; teach safe temperature testing.**
-  *Enjoys getting very messy and may not recognise when to stop*
 **Set clear time limits and structured start/end cues for messy play.**
-  *Seeks strong tactile input (messy activities, touching others)*
 **Provide safe, structured tactile activities and heavy work or deep pressure alternatives.**
-  *Displays strong urge to touch everything in public (shops, walls, surfaces)*
 **Offer a fidget item or “busy hands” tool; teach clear public rules.**



From Patterns to Practical Support

Use this section if tactile needs were identified as affecting learning, independence, emotional regulation, or appearing more noticeable at home than school. If tactile needs increase at certain times (e.g. transitions, playtime, after school), use these targeted supports to reduce cumulative stress.



IF TACTILE NEEDS ARE IMPACTING...

LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION

- Adjust seating to increase personal space
- Reduce carpet/group proximity where possible
- Offer edge-of-group or end-of-line positions
- Pre-warn before practical or messy activities
- Allow use of tools (brushes, gloves) rather than direct touch

SELF-CARE OR INDEPENDENCE

- Structured dressing routine (same order daily)
- Remove labels or trial alternative fabrics
- Schedule hygiene “check-in” points (mirror routine)
- Provide firm towel pressure after bathing
- Use visual step-by-step for brushing teeth & visual timer

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- Predictable calming tactile input after busy periods
- Deep pressure before transitions (wall push, firm hug if appropriate)
- Reduce unexpected touch from peers/adults
- Create “safe space” with blanket/cushion
- Offer firm touch rather than light touch

NEEDS APPEAR MASKED IN SCHOOL

- Continue to embed agreed tactile strategies consistently, even if distress is not outwardly observed in school. Coping does not mean comfortable.
- Pre-empt after-school decompression (deep pressure, quiet time)
- Reduce cumulative tactile (& all sensory systems) load across the school day

TACTILE NEEDS APPEAR MORE NOTICEABLE...

TRANSITIONS

- Increase physical space during lining up
- Allow child to move at the front or back of group
- Offer deep pressure or heavy work before transition
- Pre-warn before physical proximity situations
- Reduce rushing
- Adapt environment so proximity is limited eg: placing coat peg at the end of the line

PLAY / LUNCH TIME

- Structured role in play to reduce unpredictable touch
- Seating with increased elbow space
- Separate food textures
- Access to wipes without needing to ask
- Clear “start and finish” cues for messy play

AFTER SCHOOL

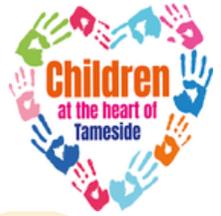
- Immediate decompression time (quiet, low demand)
- Deep pressure or blanket wrap
- Reduce conversation demands initially
- Avoid additional sensory-heavy tasks
- Predictable after-school routine

DURING PERIODS OF CHANGE / OUT OF ROUTINE

- Increase predictability wherever possible (visual plans, verbal previews)
- Keep clothing and comfort items consistent during new situations
- Maintain one familiar tactile “anchor” (blanket, hoodie, textured object)
- Allow extra time
- Lower non-essential expectations temporarily
- Provide clear start and end cues for new activities



Over-Responsive / Sensitive to VISUAL input



Use this section if visual needs were identified as a priority in the screening checklist.



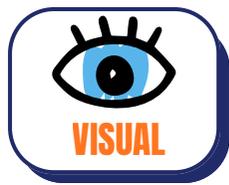
SCHOOL

-  *Becomes overwhelmed or anxious in visually busy classrooms*
 -  **Reduce visual clutter; use neutral wall space near seating; create a low-stimulus “focus zone.”**
-  *Struggles to focus when walls are covered with displays or bright visuals*
 -  **Seat facing a clear wall; cover excess displays temporarily; limit competing visual information near work area.**
-  *Visually “shut down” during teaching input*
 -  **Provide printed notes or simplified slides; reduce visual load on the board; check understanding in short chunks.**
-  *Becomes unsettled by movement around them (children walking past, lining up nearby)*
 -  **Seat at edge of group; minimise traffic flow nearby; provide a clear visual boundary around workspace.**
-  *Finds assemblies, corridors or dining halls overwhelming*
 -  **Pre-warn with visuals; allow early entry/exit; identify a quieter standing or seating spot.**
-  *Appears anxious or dysregulated during transitions*
 -  **Use visual timetables and countdowns; show “what next” cards; reduce last-minute changes where possible.**
-  *Squints, turns away, or covers eyes in bright lighting*
 -  **Use softer lighting where possible; seat away from windows; allow cap/hood up if appropriate.**
-  *Becomes fatigued or dysregulated after visually demanding tasks (copying, scanning worksheets)*
 -  **Provide larger font; reduce copying demands; give visual breaks between tasks.**



HOME

-  *Becomes overwhelmed in cluttered or visually busy rooms*
 -  **Create one visually calm area; reduce open shelving; use simple storage systems.**
-  *Dislikes bright lights and prefers dimmer environments*
 -  **Use lamps instead of overhead lights; consider warm bulbs; allow control over lighting.**
-  *Finds busy shops or public places distressing*
 -  **Visit during quieter times; prepare with visual preview; keep trips short and predictable.**
-  *Becomes unsettled when furniture, rooms or routines change*
 -  **Prepare in advance with photos; explain what will look different; keep at least one familiar visual anchor.**
-  *Struggles to settle at the end of the day*
 -  **Reduce screen brightness; dim lights gradually; simplify evening visual input.**
-  *Appears irritable or withdrawn after busy days*
 -  **Offer low-visual downtime (quiet corner, audiobook, low light); reduce additional demands.**



Under-Responsive to VISUAL input

Use this section if visual needs were identified as a priority in the screening checklist.



SCHOOL

- 🔍 *Misses information written on the board or displayed in the classroom*
➤ **Provide highlighted key information; use visual checklists; position child centrally with clear view of the board.**
- 🔍 *Appears slow to respond to visual instructions or demonstrations*
➤ **Pair visuals with verbal cues; give extra processing time; point explicitly to what is important.**
- 🔍 *Struggles to locate resources or belongings*
➤ **Use labelled trays with photos; consistent storage locations; colour-coded systems.**
- 🔍 *Has difficulty copying from the board or scanning worksheets*
➤ **Reduce copying; provide printed copies; use finger tracking or reading windows.**
- 🔍 *Does not notice visual cues (signals, gestures, visual timetables)*
➤ **Teach meaning of signals explicitly; rehearse visual cues during calm times; reinforce consistently.**
- 🔍 *Appears disengaged during visually presented lessons*
➤ **Add interactive elements; use high-contrast materials; break information into smaller visual chunks.**
- 🔍 *Bumps into furniture or peers in busy spaces*
➤ **Use clear pathways; reduce visual clutter on floors; practise spatial awareness activities.**
- 🔍 *Relies heavily on adult prompts to stay on task*
➤ **Use personal visual checklist; tick-off system; visual “start-finish” structure; visual timer.**



HOME

- 🔍 *Does not notice mess, toys or items around them*
➤ **Use clear visual routines for tidying; photo of “what tidy looks like.”**
- 🔍 *Struggles to find items even when they are in plain sight*
➤ **Limit number of visible items; use labelled drawers with pictures; keep layout consistent.**
- 🔍 *Does not notice mismatched, inside-out or untidy clothing*
➤ **Use mirror-check routine; provide visual dressing checklist.**
- 🔍 *Watches TV or uses screens very closely*
➤ **Encourage seated viewing distance; use visual boundary marker (tape line on floor if needed).**
- 🔍 *Misses visual social cues (facial expressions, gestures)*
➤ **Explicitly teach facial cues; use emotion visuals; model noticing and naming expressions.**
- 🔍 *Needs repeated reminders to complete routines*
➤ **Provide step-by-step visual routine card; place at point of performance (e.g., by sink, by door).**



From Patterns to Practical Support

Use this section if visual needs were identified as affecting learning, independence, emotional regulation, or appearing more noticeable at certain times of day. If visual demands increase in busy, unpredictable or cluttered environments, use these targeted supports to reduce cumulative overload.



IF VISUAL NEEDS ARE IMPACTING...

LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION

- Reduce visual clutter around the board
- Seat facing a neutral wall rather than displays
- Provide printed copies instead of copying from the board
- Break worksheets into smaller sections
- Use larger font or increased spacing
- Highlight key information

SELF-CARE OR INDEPENDENCE

- Use visual step-by-step routine cards (dressing, packing bag)
 - Provide photo example of “what finished looks like”
- Use labelled drawers or colour-coded systems
- Keep layout of bedroom or classroom consistent
- Reduce number of visible choices
- Use mirror-check routine for clothing

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- Provide a visually calm “low stimulus” space
- Dim lights during heightened stress
- Reduce screen brightness
- Offer visual countdown before transitions
- Avoid adding extra visual information during distress
- Allow short visual breaks (eyes closed, facing wall, low light)

NEEDS APPEAR MASKED IN SCHOOL

- Continue to embed agreed visual strategies consistently, even if distress is not outwardly observed in school. Coping does not mean comfortable.
- Ask where the child feels most visually “tired”
- Pre-empt after-school decompression time
- Reduce evening screen intensity
- Create one visually calm area at home

VISUAL NEEDS APPEAR MORE NOTICEABLE...

TRANSITIONS

- Use clear visual timetable with “now and next”
- Give advance visual warning of change
- Offer visual countdown before transitions
- Remove unnecessary visual materials before switching tasks
- Reduce crowding near doorways
- Avoid rushing between visually different spaces

PLAY / LUNCH TIME

- Identify quieter seating area
- Seat away from high traffic movement
- Reduce visual chaos on table (limit items out at once)
- Provide defined personal eating space
- Allow short visual break after busy playground

AFTER SCHOOL

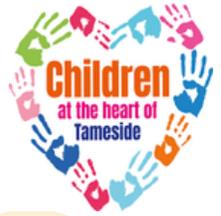
- Immediate low-demand, low-visual decompression time
- Reduce background screens on arrival home
- Dim lighting gradually in the evening
- Avoid adding new visual tasks immediately
- Keep evening routine visually simple and predictable

DURING PERIODS OF CHANGE / OUT OF ROUTINE

- Increase predictability using visual plans and previews
- Show photos of new environments before visiting
- Keep familiar visual “anchors” (same bag, same coat, same layout where possible)
- Lower non-essential expectations temporarily
- Provide clear start and end points for unfamiliar activities
- Reduce overall visual demand during weeks of change



Over-Responsive / Sensitive to AUDITORY input



Use this section if auditory needs were identified as a priority in the screening checklist.



SCHOOL

- 🔍 *Becomes distressed or upset by loud or unexpected noises (bells, chairs scraping, shouting)*
 - **Provide advance warning where possible; use ear defenders or quiet space; reduce scraping by adding chair/furniture pads.**

- 🔍 *Struggles to concentrate in noisy classrooms*
 - **Seat away from high-traffic areas; use visual instructions to reduce verbal load; offer noise-reducing headphones for focused tasks.**

- Finds assemblies, dining hall or PE hall overwhelming*
 - **Pre-visit space when empty; allow edge seating near exit; offer shorter attendance with planned break option.**

- 🔍 *Becomes anxious before known noisy times of day (lunch, assemblies, transitions)*
 - **Use visual timetable countdowns; preview what to expect; provide calming strategy before entering space.**

- 🔍 *Covers ears, cries or withdraws when noise levels increase*
 - **Reduce demand immediately; move to lower-noise area; model calm voice and reduce verbal input.**

- 🔍 *Appears tired, irritable or dysregulated after noisy periods*
 - **Schedule quiet recovery time after high-noise activities; reduce additional demands immediately following.**

- 🔍 *Finds group work difficult due to multiple voices*
 - **Use structured turn-taking; assign clear roles; reduce group size; provide written task outline.**

- 🔍 *Notices background noises others don't and is distracted by this*
 - **Reduce competing auditory input (close doors/windows, turn off unused equipment); offer white noise or consistent low-level sound if helpful.**



HOME

- 🔍 *Becomes distressed by household noises (hoover, TV, siblings)*
 - **Give warning before starting appliances; allow child to leave room; consider ear defenders during unavoidable noise.**

- 🔍 *Finds busy places (shops, cafés, family gatherings) overwhelming*
 - **Visit at quieter times; keep trips short and predictable; identify quiet retreat space in advance.**

- 🔍 *Becomes upset by sudden or high-pitched sounds*
 - **Avoid surprise sounds; lower notification volumes; use softer tones where possible.**

- 🔍 *Appears irritable or withdrawn after noisy outings*
 - **Plan decompression time at home (quiet room, low light, minimal conversation).**

- 🔍 *Struggles to settle at the end of the day*
 - **Reduce evening auditory load (lower TV volume, limit background noise); use predictable wind-down routine.**

- 🔍 *Notices background noises others don't and is distressed by this*
 - **Identify and remove non-essential sounds; consider white noise machine at bedtime.**



Under-Responsive to AUDITORY input

Use this section if auditory needs were identified as a priority in the screening checklist.



SCHOOL

- 🔍 *Does not respond when their name is called*
➤ **Gain visual attention first (eye contact, gesture); use gentle touch cue if appropriate.**
- 🔍 *Misses verbal instructions unless they are repeated*
➤ **Pair verbal instructions with written or visual cues; check understanding individually.**
- 🔍 *Appears unaware of background noise or loud environments*
➤ **Teach sound-awareness through structured listening activities; use clear start/stop cues.**
- 🔍 *Struggles to follow group discussions or carpet-time input*
➤ **Seat near adult; use visual prompt cards; provide key words in writing.**
- 🔍 *Appears slow to process spoken information*
➤ **Allow extra processing time; avoid rapid-fire instructions; break information into short chunks.**
- 🔍 *Appears disengaged during verbally led lessons*
➤ **Increase visual supports; use movement-based learning; ask child to repeat back key instruction.**



HOME

- 🔍 *Does not respond when spoken to unless approached closely*
➤ **Move into visual range before speaking; reduce competing background noise.**
- 🔍 *Needs instructions repeated many times*
➤ **Use consistent phrasing; pair with visual checklist or step-by-step chart.**
- 🔍 *Does not notice alarms, timers or background sounds*
➤ **Use visual timers alongside auditory ones; practice recognising key sounds.**
- 🔍 *Watches TV or listens to devices at high volume*
➤ **Set consistent volume limits; use headphones with volume control; teach safe listening levels.**
- 🔍 *Appears "in their own world" during conversations*
➤ **Use name + pause + eye contact before speaking; keep instructions short and concrete.**



From Patterns to Practical Support

Use this section if auditory needs were identified as affecting learning, independence, emotional regulation, or appearing more noticeable at certain times of the day. If auditory needs increase at specific times (e.g. transitions, assemblies, busy spaces, end of day), use these targeted supports to reduce cumulative sound load.



IF AUDITORY NEEDS ARE IMPACTING...

LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION

- Seat near adult and away from high-traffic/noisy areas
- Reduce background noise where possible (doors closed, unused tech off)
- Provide written or visual instructions alongside verbal input
- Break instructions into short chunks
- Use visual timers and task checklists
- Prompt use of ear defenders or loops for noisier activities/environments.

SELF-CARE OR INDEPENDENCE

- Use visual checklists rather than repeated verbal prompts
- Gain attention before giving instructions (name + pause + eye contact)
- Reduce competing noise during routines (TV off during dressing/teeth brushing)
- Teach safe listening levels for devices
- Pair alarms with visual cues (flashing timer or checklist)

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- Provide predictable quiet recovery time after noisy periods
- Pre-warn before loud events (bells, assemblies, hoover)
- Offer a quiet “safe space” option
- Reduce verbal demands during dysregulation
- Use calm, low, steady voice tone
- Avoid layering multiple auditory demands (instructions + noise + questions)

NEEDS APPEAR MASKED IN SCHOOL

- Embed agreed auditory supports consistently even if distress is not visible
- Compare home and school patterns to identify cumulative load
- Pre-empt after-school decompression (quiet time before conversation)
- Reduce total sound exposure across the school day where possible
- Monitor fatigue after noisy days (assemblies, events, PE hall use)

AUDITORY NEEDS APPEAR MORE NOTICEABLE...

TRANSITIONS

- Reduce corridor congestion where possible
- Allow early or staggered movement
- Provide visual transition cues rather than shouted instructions
- Pre-warn before bells or loud signals
- Offer ear defenders during particularly noisy changeovers

PLAY / LUNCH TIME

- Provide access to quieter play option or indoor space
- Allow edge seating in dining hall
- Reduce expectation for constant social interaction
- Keep instructions simple and minimal
- Plan short, structured roles in play to reduce chaotic noise exposure

AFTER SCHOOL

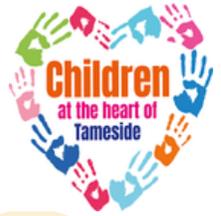
- Immediate quiet decompression time (low demand, minimal conversation)
- Reduce household background noise initially
- Avoid multiple verbal questions straight after school
- Offer calming sensory activity before homework
- Keep evening routines predictable and lower in auditory demand

DURING PERIODS OF CHANGE / OUT OF ROUTINE

- Increase predictability with visual plans and previews
- Reduce non-essential sound (TV off, quieter environments)
- Keep voice tone calm and consistent
- Provide extra processing time
- Lower expectations temporarily if sound tolerance decreases
- Offer structured quiet breaks during new or busy events



Over-Responsive / Sensitive to SMELL input



Use this section if olfactory needs were identified as a priority in the screening checklist.



SCHOOL

- 🔍 *Becomes distressed or refuses to enter certain spaces because of smells (toilets, dining hall, classrooms)*
 - **Provide alternative entry routes where possible; allow gradual exposure; ensure ventilation; pre-warn before entering high-odour areas. Offer preferred 'calming' scent on a tissue or handkerchief to smell when feeling overwhelmed.**
- 🔍 *Reacts strongly to food smells in the classroom or dining hall*
 - **Seat away from strong food odours; allow early/late lunch access if possible; provide neutral scent anchor (e.g. unscented cloth).**
- 🔍 *Becomes unsettled by cleaning products, air fresheners or staff perfume*
 - **Minimise use of strong fragrances in shared spaces; opt for unscented products where possible.**
- 🔍 *Appears nauseous, gags or becomes tearful when exposed to certain smells*
 - **Remove child from source promptly; avoid forcing exposure; introduce smells gradually only when regulated.**
- 🔍 *Struggles to concentrate when unpleasant smells are present*
 - **Increase ventilation; relocate seating; reduce competing sensory load. Offer preferred 'calming' scent on a tissue or handkerchief to smell when feeling overwhelmed.**
- 🔍 *Avoids practical activities due to smell (art materials, glue, cooking activities)*
 - **Use low-odour alternatives; allow gloves or tools; introduce gradually with clear start/end cues.**
- 🔍 *Tells peers or adults that they smell, leading to social difficulties*
 - **Teach private, respectful language; role-play alternatives; provide clear social boundaries about commenting on smell.**



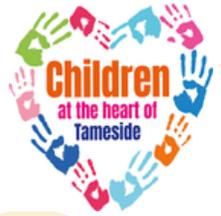
HOME

- 🔍 *Refuses certain foods because of the smell*
 - **Offer separation of foods; introduce new smells gradually without pressure; allow preferred "safe" options.**
- 🔍 *Becomes distressed by household smells (cooking, bins, pets)*
 - **Increase ventilation; plan cooking when child is out of room; provide predictable warning before strong smells occur.**
- 🔍 *Avoids bathrooms or toilets due to smells*
 - **Improve ventilation; use neutral odour control; allow alternative bathroom if available.**
- 🔍 *Reacts strongly to perfume, deodorant or washing products*
 - **Switch to fragrance-free products; allow child input in product selection.**
- 🔍 *Appears irritable or overwhelmed in public places with strong smells*
 - **Keep visits brief; build in recovery time afterwards; identify quieter, well-ventilated areas. Offer preferred 'calming' scent on a tissue or handkerchief to smell when feeling overwhelmed.**
- 🔍 *Tells peers or adults that they smell, leading to social difficulties*
 - **Teach social filters and private feedback rules; reinforce empathy and appropriate boundaries.**



Under-Responsive to SMELL input

Use this section if olfactory needs were identified as a priority in the screening checklist.



SCHOOL

-  *Does not notice unpleasant smells that others react to*
 **Teach basic safety rules about reporting unusual smells (smoke, gas); use visual reminders.**
-  *Does not notice when food, clothes or belongings smell unpleasant*
 **Build routine hygiene and belongings checks; use visual prompts before transitions.**
-  *Appears unaware of hygiene issues (body odour, toileting accidents)*
 **Use scheduled hygiene routines; offer discreet adult check-ins rather than waiting for awareness.**
-  *Does not notice strong smells that indicate risk (burning, cleaning chemicals)*
 **Adults monitor environment; teach explicit safety awareness; avoid independent access to strong chemicals.**
-  *Attempts to smell cleaning products, chemicals or unsafe substances*
 **Store products securely; explicitly teach “look, don’t smell” safety rule; redirect to safe sensory alternatives.**



HOME

-  *Does not notice when clothes need changing or washing*
 **Create predictable clothing change routine; use laundry basket visual cues.**
-  *Appears unaware of body odour*
 **Establish consistent hygiene schedule; use non-shaming language and clear expectations.**
-  *Does not react to strong or unpleasant household smells*
 **Adults monitor safety; model noticing and responding appropriately.**
-  *Attempts to smell cleaning products, chemicals or unsafe substances*
 **Keep products out of reach; teach clear safety boundaries; provide safe scented alternatives if seeking.**



From Patterns to Practical Support

Use this section if olfactory needs were identified as affecting learning, independence, emotional regulation, or appearing more noticeable at certain times of the day. If smell sensitivities increase in particular environments (e.g. dining hall, toilets, public spaces, after school), use these supports to reduce cumulative sensory stress.



IF SMELL NEEDS ARE IMPACTING...

LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION

- Seat away from strong odours
- Increase ventilation where possible
- Use unscented materials
- Allow discreet relocation if overwhelmed
- Reduce simultaneous sensory load (noise + smell)

SELF-CARE OR INDEPENDENCE

- Build consistent hygiene routines
- Use visual checklists for washing/changing
- Offer fragrance-free product options
- Teach safety rules about chemicals and strong smells

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- Provide neutral “reset” space with fresh air
- Pre-warn before entering high-odour areas
- Avoid forcing exposure during dysregulation
- Offer predictable recovery time after busy outings
- Offer preferred ‘calming’ scent on a tissue or handkerchief to smell when feeling overwhelmed.

NEEDS APPEAR MASKED IN SCHOOL

- Compare home and school patterns (e.g. after-school overwhelm)
- Embed hygiene supports consistently even if distress is not visible
- Monitor cumulative load after dining hall or practical lessons
- Pre-empt decompression after busy days with lots of environmental changes

SMELL NEEDS APPEAR MORE NOTICEABLE...

TRANSITIONS

- Pre-warn before entering toilets/dining areas
- Allow staggered movement where possible
- Provide choice of seating position
- Offer preferred ‘calming’ scent on a tissue or handkerchief to smell when feeling overwhelmed.

PLAY / LUNCH TIME

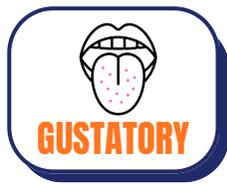
- Seat at edge of dining hall
- Separate food smells where possible
- Provide access to outdoor air break
- Offer preferred ‘calming’ scent on a tissue or handkerchief to smell when feeling overwhelmed.

AFTER SCHOOL

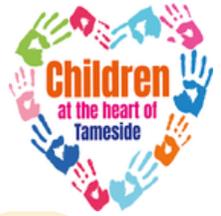
- Offer immediate decompression time
- Reduce strong cooking smells initially
- Keep evening predictable and low-demand
- Offer preferred ‘calming’ scent such as a familiar spray within their safe space.

DURING PERIODS OF CHANGE / OUT OF ROUTINE

- Increase predictability and previews
- Keep familiar clothing/products consistent
- Maintain one “neutral scent” anchor item
- Lower non-essential expectations temporarily
- Provide clear start and end cues for new activities
- Offer preferred ‘calming’ scent on a tissue or handkerchief to smell when feeling overwhelmed.



Over-Responsive / Sensitive to TASTE input



Use this section if gustatory needs were identified as a priority in the screening checklist.



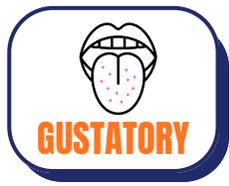
SCHOOL

-  *Refuses school dinners or avoids eating at school*
Allow packed lunch option if possible; provide predictable seating; reduce pressure to try new foods in busy settings. Offer quieter space to eat.
-  *Becomes distressed by strong tastes or flavours*
Offer milder alternatives; avoid forcing exposure; introduce stronger flavours gradually at calm times.
-  *Struggles with mixed foods or foods touching*
Separate foods clearly; use compartment trays; allow control over food arrangement.
-  *Avoids tasting activities in lessons (e.g. cooking, food technology, cultural days)*
Offer opt-in tasting; allow smelling or observing instead; provide alternative participation role.
-  *Gags or becomes upset when encouraged to try new foods*
Remove pressure; school is not the place to be trying new foods - even if the child appears 'fine'.
-  *Finds lunchtime overwhelming due to taste, smell and noise combined*
Provide quieter seating option; stagger lunch if possible; reduce combined sensory load.



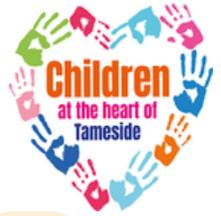
HOME

-  *Eats a very limited range of foods*
Keep a stable "safe foods" list; introduce one small change at a time; avoid removing preferred foods abruptly.
-  *Refuses foods based on taste even if appearance seems acceptable*
Explore flavour intensity (sweet/salty/bitter); adjust seasoning levels; offer dips to modify flavour.
-  *Becomes distressed when asked to try new foods*
Use no-pressure exposure; model tasting without expectation; maintain calm, neutral response. Consider the overall environment.
-  *Prefers bland or specific flavours*
Respect preference while slowly widening tolerance; introduce similar but slightly varied options.
-  *Prefers bland or specific textures*
Match texture first before changing flavour; adjust temperature to modify taste intensity.
-  *Brushing teeth is tricky due to toothpaste being too minty or "spicy"*
Switch to mild/ flavour-free toothpaste that is non-foaming; introduce gradually; use visual timer for predictability.



Under-Responsive to TASTE input

Use this section if gustatory needs were identified as a priority in the screening checklist.



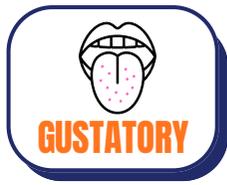
SCHOOL

-  *Seeks strong flavours (very salty, spicy, sour)*
 **Provide safe, structured access to strong flavours during meals; monitor for overuse.**
-  *Overfills mouth or eats very quickly*
 **Use smaller portions at a time; model paced eating; introduce chew-and-swallow cues.**
-  *Does not notice when food is too hot or cold*
 **Adults monitor temperature; teach “blow and check” routine; encourage pausing before biting.**
-  *Appears unaware of food residue on face or in mouth*
 **Build mirror-check routine after meals; use visual hygiene checklist.**
-  *Eats non-food items or mouths objects*
 **Provide safe oral sensory alternatives (chewelry, crunchy snacks); monitor closely for safety. Consider chewing is a form of proprioception rather than ‘taste seeking’**



HOME

-  *Eats very spicy, strong or intense flavours without noticing*
 **Set safe limits; monitor tolerance; balance strong flavours with hydration.**
-  *Does not recognise when food is too hot or unsafe*
 **Teach explicit temperature checking routine; supervise high-risk foods.**
-  *Appears unaware of tastes that others find unpleasant*
 **Teach descriptive language about flavours; use modelling rather than shaming.**
-  *Eats non-food items or mouths objects*
 **Remove unsafe items; provide safe oral sensory tools; increase supervision during play. Provide safe oral sensory alternatives (chewelry, crunchy snacks); monitor closely for safety. Consider chewing is a form of proprioception rather than ‘taste seeking’**
-  *Overfills mouth or eats very quickly*
 **Use smaller portions at a time; model paced eating; introduce chew-and-swallow cues.**



From Patterns to Practical Support

Use this section if gustatory needs were identified as affecting learning, independence, emotional regulation, or appearing more noticeable at certain times of the day. If taste sensitivities increase in particular environments (e.g. dining hall, eating out, public spaces, after school), use these supports to reduce cumulative sensory stress.



IF TASTE NEEDS ARE IMPACTING...

LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION

- Reduce pressure around tasting activities
- Offer alternative ways to participate
- Seat in calmer dining area
- Keep flavour intensity predictable

SELF-CARE OR INDEPENDENCE

- Build consistent meal routine
- Use mirror-check after eating
- Teach temperature checking explicitly
- Offer safe oral sensory alternatives

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- Avoid power struggles around food
- Keep exposure gradual and predictable
- Maintain safe foods during stressful periods
- Reduce combined sensory load at meals

NEEDS APPEAR MASKED IN SCHOOL

- Compare home and school eating patterns
- Notice after-school hunger crashes
- Pre-empt evening dysregulation after skipped meals
- Embed supports even if child “just manages” at school

TASTE NEEDS APPEAR MORE NOTICEABLE...

TRANSITIONS

- Offer snack before high-demand activities
- Avoid introducing new foods during busy transitions

PLAY / LUNCH TIME

- Provide structured eating space
- Reduce noise and crowding where possible
- Offer quieter space to eat
- Allow visual distraction while eating eg: looking at a book

AFTER SCHOOL

- Offer predictable snack on arrival home
- Avoid introducing new foods when fatigued

DURING PERIODS OF CHANGE / OUT OF ROUTINE

- Keep familiar foods consistent
- Lower expectations around trying new foods
- Maintain clear meal timing structure
- Avoid surprise flavour changes
- Give advance notice of meals for the day / what will be available.



Over-Responsive / Sensitive to VESTIBULAR input



Use this section if vestibular needs were identified as a priority in the screening checklist.



SCHOOL

-  *Becomes anxious or distressed during PE or movement games*
 **Offer gradual exposure; allow opt-in participation; provide predictable sequence of activities beforehand.**
-  *Avoids playground equipment (climbing frames, swings, slides)*
 **Start with low-height, stable equipment; provide hand support; allow watching before trying. Don't force engagement.**
-  *Becomes distressed when feet leave the ground*
 **Focus on grounded activities first (pushing, carrying, wall pushes); build tolerance slowly. Offer foot stool to support stability.**
-  *Finds lining up, rushing or busy transitions unsettling*
 **Slow transitions down; allow early movement; position at front or back of line.**
-  *Appears fearful of falling or losing balance*
 **Provide stable seating; use visual markers for personal space; reduce unpredictable movement nearby.**
-  *Becomes dysregulated after movement-heavy parts of the day*
 **Schedule calming proprioceptive input after movement (wall pushes, carrying books, deep pressure).**



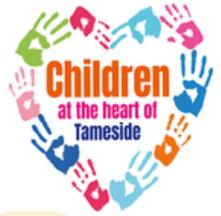
HOME

-  *Avoids bikes, scooters, swings or soft play*
 **Introduce gradually (led by child) in quiet settings; keep feet near ground initially; avoid peer pressure.**
-  *Becomes anxious on stairs, in lifts, on escalators or in car journeys*
 **Offer hand-holding; pre-warn before movement changes; use consistent verbal cues. Sit in the middle of car and encourage to look forward. Offer proprioception (weighted lap pad, polo to suck if appropriate)**
-  *Keeps head upright or shows distress when head is tilted away from upright (eg; bending down to put shoes on, picking objects off floor)*
 **Modify tasks to reduce head inversion (bring items up to table height); allow seated shoe dressing; encourage bending at knees rather than folding forward; introduce graded movement practice slowly and predictably.**
-  *Appears unsettled after busy days with lots of movement*
 **Build in decompression time (quiet, low movement, deep pressure) before adding demands.**



Under-Responsive to VESTIBULAR input

Use this section if vestibular needs were identified as a priority in the screening checklist.



SCHOOL

-  *Seeks constant movement (jumping, rocking, spinning)*
 **Provide structured movement breaks; schedule regular movement intervals; use movement as part of learning. Offer sensory circuits as part of daily routine.**
-  *Struggles to remain seated during lessons*
 **Build planned movement into the lesson (movement breaks, jobs, stand-and-work options); provide subtle movement tools (wobble cushion, resistance band, standing desk); agree clear “movement check-in” times so the child doesn’t need to escape to regulate.**
-  *Takes physical risks without noticing danger*
 **Teach explicit safety rules; supervise high-risk activities; offer safe climbing alternatives.**
-  *Appears more settled after PE or active play*
 **Use planned movement before focused tasks; embed movement before high-demand lessons. Use movement breaks and sensory circuits during daily routine.**
-  *Appears unaware of dizziness or spins excessively*
 **Set clear time limits for spinning; introduce “stop and check” body cues; pair with grounding input.**
-  *Leans on walls, furniture, or other people for support when standing or sitting*
 **Provide alternative sources of stability and body feedback (chair with back support, footrest, weighted lap pad, wall-push breaks); teach “feet flat, back back” posture using visual cues and regular movement resets.**



HOME

-  *Constantly climbs furniture or jumps off surfaces*
 **Create safe climbing/jumping space; set clear rules about where movement is allowed. Offer structured movement opportunities at home.**
-  *Seeks fast or intense movement (running, crashing, spinning)*
 **Provide structured heavy work (pushing laundry basket, obstacle courses); avoid unstructured chaos.**
-  *Finds it hard to calm down without physical activity*
 **Build predictable movement routines before calm activities; use heavy work to transition.**
-  *Appears tired but still seeks movement*
 **Offer rhythmic, predictable movement (rocking chair, gentle rolling on gym ball) rather than fast input.**
-  *Difficulties remaining seated during meals, homework or family activities (e.g. repeatedly getting up, fidgeting, finding reasons to leave the table)*
 **Build movement into routines (movement before homework, active jobs between tasks); allow alternative positions (standing at counter, kneeling chair, floor work); use short, timed work periods followed by planned movement; offer subtle movement tools (chewable, fidget, resistance band on chair legs).**



From Patterns to Practical Support

Use this section if vestibular needs were identified as impacting learning, independence, emotional regulation, or becoming more noticeable at specific times.



IF VESTIBULAR NEEDS ARE IMPACTING...

LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION

- Movement before learning
- Alternative seating options
- Clear physical boundaries in group tasks
- Reduce rushing between tasks
- Focus tools available and within visual eyeline. Child may need prompts.

SELF-CARE OR INDEPENDENCE

- Support balance during dressing (sit down to dress)
- Provide stable surface for hygiene tasks
- Slow down stair routines
- Stability during toileting - offer stool for feet or hand rails

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- Use heavy work after intense movement
- Avoid sudden changes in position
- Reduce spinning and unpredictable movement when dysregulated
- Offer movement that is predictable, repetitive and rhythmic

NEEDS APPEAR MASKED IN SCHOOL

- Embed movement breaks proactively even if child “just manages”
- Notice after-school crashes
- Compare school-day movement demands with home behaviour

VESTIBULAR NEEDS APPEAR MORE NOTICEABLE...

TRANSITIONS

- Slow pace; reduce rushing
- Allow early exit to avoid crowd movement
- Provide grounding task before next activity
- Create clear walk ways and visual prompts on navigating the space

PLAY / LUNCH TIME

- Offer a predictable playground plan (where to go first, who to play with, when to stop)
- Allow a brief decompression period before returning to academic demand
- Pair intense movement with calm-down routine
- Add structured heavy work immediately after play (wall pushes, carrying items)

AFTER SCHOOL

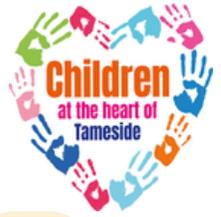
- Offer decompression movement (walk, heavy work)
- Avoid back-to-back high movement activities
- Avoid unstructured rough play immediately after school
- Reduce rapid direction changes or spinning activities
- Keep instructions minimal during the first 20-30 minutes

DURING PERIODS OF CHANGE / OUT OF ROUTINE

- Increase predictability of movement (visual schedule)
- Avoid surprise movement activities
- Keep bedtime wind-down calm and grounded
- Keep key anchor routines consistent (morning arrival, end-of-day wind-down)
- Avoid stacking multiple movement-heavy activities



Proprioception: The Organising System



The power of Proprioception

Proprioceptive input (body awareness, muscle work and deep pressure) is typically regulating for most children.

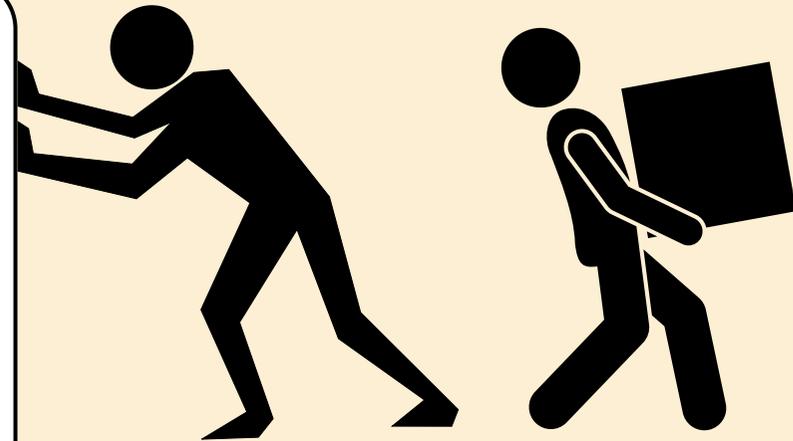
Difficulties in this system are more often linked to under-regulation, force control or movement seeking than sensitivity.

When in doubt - *heavy work it out!*

Increasing structured opportunities for pushing, pulling, lifting, carrying and resistance throughout the day can:

- Improve focus
- Support emotional regulation
- Reduce impulsive force
- Help children feel calmer and more organised
- Improve body control for fine motor tasks
- Support smoother transitions

Unlike some sensory inputs, proprioceptive input is rarely overwhelming when provided in a safe, structured way.



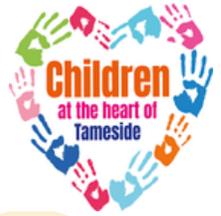
Proprioception Principles

- Build it in before demand increases (not only after dysregulation)
- Think “muscles and joints” rather than speed or spinning
- Offer resistance rather than stimulation
- Use it preventatively across the day
- Increase it temporarily during change, transitions or heightened stress

Proprioceptive input supports regulation across all sensory systems by increasing body predictability.



SEEKS OR NEEDS INCREASED PROPRIOCEPTIVE INPUT



Use this section if proprioception needs were identified as a priority in the screening checklist.



SCHOOL



Uses too much or too little force (presses too hard with pencils, slams doors, bumps into peers)



Teach “force scale” awareness (1–5 pressure scale); provide regular heavy work before fine motor tasks.



Appears clumsy or frequently bumps into furniture or peers



Create clear physical pathways; use chair bands or weighted lap pad for body feedback.



Finds it hard to sit still at the table or on the carpet



Provide alternative seating (wobble cushion, Theraband); schedule movement/heavy work breaks.



Seeks physical contact (leaning on others, crashing into peers, hugging tightly)



Offer structured heavy work alternatives (wall pushes, carrying equipment, chair stacking).



Appears more regulated after PE or active play



Plan movement before high-focus lessons; embed short heavy work breaks throughout the day.



Difficulty judging personal space



Use visual floor markers and “bubble space” teaching; practise lining up with spacing cues.



Appears overwhelmed or tired after fine motor tasks due to poor force control



Alternate writing with proprioceptive input (push wall, carry books); offer alternative methods of evidencing learning; ‘disco dough’ finger warm up; Trial mechanical pencil or grip.



Chews on pens, hoodie strings, sleeves, collars, buttons constantly



Provide appropriate chew/fidget alternatives; build oral sensory breaks into the day.



Picks at skin, nails, cuticles, scabs, or hair during learning



Provide discreet fidget tools; increase heavy work before seated learning.



Tears paper, fiddles with Blu Tack, picks erasers, snaps pencils (seeking resistance/force)



Offer resistive fidgets or putty; schedule structured squeezing tasks.



Constantly taps, squeezes, presses, or leans heavily on the table/body



Trial weighted lap pad or chair push-ups before seated work.



Becomes more “heavy/rocky/fiddly” during tricky thinking, writing, or when stressed



Pre-load with heavy work before cognitively demanding tasks; break work into shorter chunks.



Likes sitting pressed against walls, in corners, or wedged into small spaces



Create a designated calm corner with cushions/bean bag for safe compression input; Try offering sensory blackout pop-up tent for calm breaks.



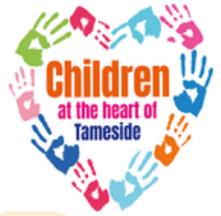
Appears calmer when wearing tight or snug clothing (leggings, hoodies pulled tight)



Allow snug layers where appropriate; consider compression-style clothing if suitable; allow child to wear hood up when settling in after transitioning into classroom.



SEEKS OR NEEDS INCREASED PROPRIOCEPTIVE INPUT



Use this section if proprioception needs were identified as a priority in the screening checklist.

HOME

-  *Seeks crashing, jumping, squeezing or rough play*
 **Provide daily structured heavy work (obstacle course, pushing laundry basket, wall pushes).**
-  *Uses too much force during play or daily activities*
 **Teach “gentle hands” with visual cue; practise graded force games (stacking blocks carefully).**
-  *Finds it hard to calm down without physical input*
 **Build heavy work into transitions (before meals, homework, bedtime).**
-  *Chews clothing, toys, fingers, or seeks crunchy/strong input at home*
 **Offer crunchy snacks or safe chew alternatives; increase oral sensory opportunities.**
-  *Picks at nails/skin or pulls at hair when watching TV, gaming, homework, or winding down*
 **Provide fidget or resistive toy during quiet activities; reduce idle time without input.**
-  *Chews/picks more during worry, transitions, or after school*
 **Add structured heavy work immediately after school; provide predictable decompression routine.**
-  *Seeks strong hugs, squeezes, or being “squashed”*
 **Offer safe deep pressure (pillow squeeze, blanket wrap) with consent and predictability.**
-  *Wraps self tightly in blankets or prefers heavy covers*
 **Use weighted blanket if appropriate (remove once asleep); incorporate calming deep pressure before sleep.**
-  *Crawls into small spaces (under tables, between sofa cushions, cupboards)*
 **Create a safe “body den” area rather than discouraging the need for compression.**
-  *Crashes onto furniture or the floor to calm down*
 **Redirect to safe crash mat or cushion area; schedule heavy work earlier to reduce escalation.**
-  *Accidentally hurts others during play “doesn’t know their own strength”*
 **Practise graded force play (handshake strength game, squeezing sponge levels).**
-  *Appears restless even when tired*
 **Offer slow, rhythmic heavy work (carrying items, slow push-pull games) rather than fast movement.**
-  *Appears calmer when wearing tight or snug clothing (leggings, hoodies pulled tight)*
 **Allow snug layers at home; incorporate compression through safe, comfortable clothing; trial compression garments such as cycling shorts or rash vests.**



From Patterns to Practical Support

Use this section if proprioceptive needs were identified as impacting learning, independence, emotional regulation, or appearing more noticeable at certain times of day.



Proprioceptive input supports body awareness, force grading, and sustained regulation. When these needs are unmet, children may appear “too rough,” “too floppy,” “constantly moving,” or “tired but restless.”

IF PROPRIOCEPTION NEEDS ARE IMPACTING...

LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION

- Ensure feet are firmly grounded (footrest, resistance band on chair)
- Position materials at midline to support body organisation
- Use short movement resets before fine motor tasks
- Provide defined workspace boundaries (clear desk edges, visual mat)
- Use a slanted writing surface (folder or writing slope) to improve shoulder stability
- Trial pencil grips if force control is inconsistent
- Break writing into short, timed bursts rather than extended blocks
- Add “press and release” warm-up tasks (squeeze putty, peg board, hole punch) before writing

SELF-CARE OR INDEPENDENCE

- Practise “how much is enough?” through graded tasks (squeezing sponge, opening jars)
- Use visual scales for force (1–5 pressure scale)
- Break dressing/toileting into anchored, predictable steps
- Encourage slow, controlled movements rather than speed
- Use mirror feedback for body awareness during dressing
- Play “too soft / just right / too hard” games with everyday objects
- Use hand-over-hand modelling to demonstrate correct pressure
- Use snug but comfortable clothing for added body feedback
- Practise fastening tasks separately from full dressing routine
- Provide foot support when sitting on toilet if needed for stability
- Use weighted or thicker-handled cutlery if force control is inconsistent

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- Offer heavy work before known high-demand periods
- Teach child to recognise “body getting buzzy” or “body going floppy”
- Pair deep pressure with predictable language (“press, count 5, release”)
- Use resistance activities to support recovery after dysregulation
- Avoid introducing high-intensity movement when already escalated
- Keep pressure firm and slow, not fast and stimulating
- Avoid introducing high-intensity spinning or chasing
- Keep movements rhythmic and contained
- Offer structured tasks (carry books, move chairs) rather than open-ended play
- Reduce verbal input while the body is moving

NEEDS APPEAR MASKED IN SCHOOL

- Identify consistent supports even if behaviour appears settled
- Schedule proactive regulation before home transition
- Don’t wait for visible dysregulation before offering input
- Build whole-class movement breaks rather than individualised ones
- Rotate “classroom jobs” involving carrying, stacking, pushing
- Add resistance bands to multiple chairs, not just one
- Use wall pushes before lining up for everyone
- Offer short “stand and stretch” resets to the whole class
- Integrate push/pull tasks into transitions naturally
- Teach whole class strategies on proprioception and grounded input so the child feels safe enough to use strategies
- Offer weighted lap pad or blanket over knees during seated learning



From Patterns to Practical Support

Use this section if proprioceptive needs were identified as impacting learning, independence, emotional regulation, or appearing more noticeable at certain times of day.



PROPRIOCEPTION NEEDS APPEAR MORE NOTICEABLE...

DURING HEIGHTENED ENERGY STATES

(Excitement, dysregulation, overwhelm, conflict)

When arousal rises, force control often drops. The child may crash, grab, push too hard, or seek intense input.

Try:

- Offer strong, structured resistance input (wall pushes, chair stacking, carrying items)
- Use short, rhythmic push/pull activities before discussion
- Reduce verbal processing while body is moving
- Avoid high-speed spinning or unpredictable movement
- Model slow, heavy movements to co-regulate pace
- Provide clear physical boundaries (defined space, clear desk edges)

DURING LONG PERIODS OF SITTING

(Carpet time, assemblies, extended writing, tests)

Sustained posture requires proprioceptive stability. Without it, children fidget, lean, chew, or appear inattentive.

Try:

- Ensure feet are grounded (footrest, resistance band)
- Add subtle resistance (push palms together, press knees into hands)
- Schedule micro-movement resets every 20–30 minutes
- Alternate seated and standing tasks where possible
- Use weighted or resistance tools only if tolerated and purposeful

AFTER SCHOOL

(Fatigue, emotional drop, physical restlessness)

Many children “hold it together” in school and then crash physically at home.

Try:

- Offer immediate structured heavy work before free time
- Keep expectations low-demand initially
- Provide deep pressure (blanket wrap, cushion squeeze, body sock)
- Avoid crowded, high-speed environments straight away
- Expect increased force-seeking when tired
- Build predictable decompression routine
- Offer thick drink (smoothie/milkshake/yogurt) through a thin straw

DURING PERIODS OF CHANGE / OUT OF ROUTINE

(New classroom, supply teacher, timetable shifts, trips, christmas)

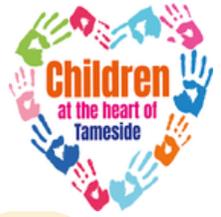
Proprioception supports internal predictability. When routines shift, body organisation may wobble.

Try:

- Increase predictable movement routines temporarily
- Use “anchor” heavy work tasks at start and end of day
- Slow transitions intentionally
- Add extra time for dressing/packing tasks
- Revisit seating and posture if physical growth has changed body awareness
- Lower precision demands temporarily (cutting, handwriting)
- Schedule more movement opportunities
- Remind children of the changes, what to expect and what tools they can use in the day.



INTEROCEPTION: INTERNAL BODY SIGNALS



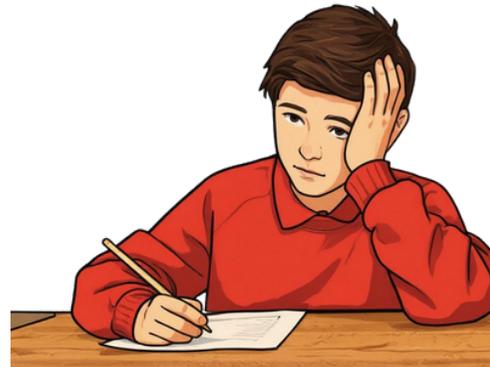
Interoception is about noticing, understanding and responding to internal body signals.

Support focuses on:

- Building awareness
- Reducing overwhelm
- Creating predictable body-check routines
- Teaching safe, practical responses

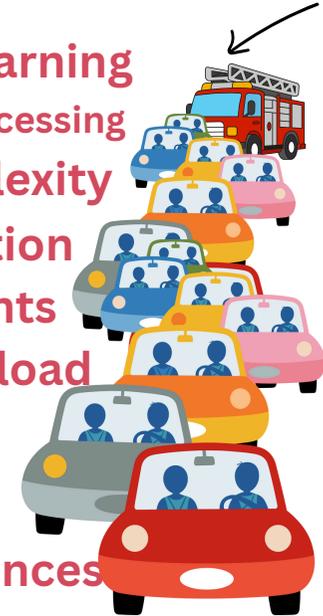
When using this section:

- Identify which body domain was selected (e.g. hunger, toileting, pain).
- Consider whether signals are “quiet” (missed) or “loud” (overwhelming).
- Start with routines and external scaffolds before expecting independence.



Interoception

Learning
Language Processing
Social Complexity
Attention
Bright lights
Visual overload
Smells
Noise
Tactile experiences



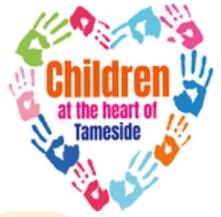
Interoception does not operate alone.

Body signals compete with learning demands, social thinking, language processing, noise, light, movement and emotional load.

When the brain is managing multiple sensory and cognitive demands at once, quieter internal signals (hunger, thirst, tiredness, needing the toilet) are often delayed or missed. The more cumulative demand across the day, the harder it becomes to notice and respond to body cues.



Interoception Principles



1. Awareness Before Independence

- Children cannot respond to body signals they do not reliably notice.
- Build predictable reminders and routines first – independence develops gradually.

2. Regulation First

- When a child is dysregulated, body signals become harder to interpret.
- Calm the nervous system before expecting reflection or naming.

3. Quiet Signals Need Predictability

- Some children do not notice hunger, pain, tiredness or toileting cues until very late.
- Use routine “body check” times rather than waiting for them to tell you.

4. Loud Signals Need Containment

- Some children experience body sensations as intense or alarming.
- Validate the feeling, reduce escalation, and teach simple scaling (low / ok / high).

5. Language Builds Awareness

- Interoception develops through repeated, simple body language.
- Link sensations to everyday words in concrete ways.

6. Attach Body Checks to Daily Routines

- Pair awareness with predictable moments (before play, after lunch, before bed).
- Consistency wires noticing.

7. Remove Shame

- Accidents, forgotten drinks, or delayed reporting are information – not defiance.
- Respond with calm problem-solving.

8. Context Always Matters

- Interoception fluctuates with stress, fatigue and unpredictability.
- Support the environment as well as the body.



INTEROCEPTION: INTERNAL BODY SIGNALS



HUNGER & THIRST

- 🔍 Notices hunger or thirst very quickly and becomes distressed
➤ Use scheduled snack times; pre-empt hunger before distress; use visual reminders to next food/drink.
- 🔍 Appears anxious about feeling hungry or thirsty
➤ Normalise body signals; use “hunger scale” visuals; reassure about when food is coming.
- 🔍 Does not notice hunger or thirst until very dysregulated
➤ Build routine drink/snack check-ins (mid-morning, mid-afternoon); use visual reminders.
- 🔍 Forgets to eat or drink without reminders
➤ Pair eating/drinking with predictable events (after play, before reading); use visual cue cards; put water bottle within visual eyeline.



TOILETING

- 🔍 Feels urgent need to use the toilet and worries about accidents
➤ Schedule regular toilet times; use visual reassurance; reduce waiting time in busy toilets.
- 🔍 Asks repeatedly to use the toilet
➤ Create structured toilet schedule; use visual timer to show next opportunity.
- 🔍 Does not notice need until very urgent
➤ Implement timed toileting routine; use body-check prompts during transitions.
- 🔍 Has accidents due to reduced awareness
➤ Reduce shame; increase predictability; reinforce calm body check-ins before key parts of day.

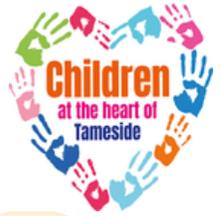


TIREDNESS / ENERGY

- 🔍 Becomes very distressed when tired
➤ Build pre-emptive rest breaks; lower demands late in day; use predictable wind-down routine.
- 🔍 Appears unaware of tiredness until exhausted
➤ Schedule movement or rest breaks; teach simple energy check scale.
- 🔍 Struggles to regulate energy levels
➤ Use predictable activity rhythm (movement → focus → movement); avoid long sedentary blocks.



INTEROCEPTION: INTERNAL BODY SIGNALS



TEMPERATURE REGULATION

- Becomes very uncomfortable in heat or cold*
➤ **Allow clothing adjustments; monitor environment; pre-warn before outdoor transitions.**
- Strong reactions to minor temperature changes*
➤ **Use layered clothing; maintain consistent indoor temperature where possible.**
- Appears unaware of being too hot or cold*
➤ **Adult-led body checks; teach “hands/face temperature check.”**
- Does not adjust clothing appropriately*
➤ **Use visual dressing prompts; build routine check before leaving house/class.**



PAIN / ILLNESS

- Frequently reports physical discomfort (tummy ache, headache)*
➤ **Rule out medical causes; track patterns; pair with calm reassurance and body naming.**
- Becomes highly distressed by minor physical sensations*
➤ **Teach sensation scale; use grounding; validate without escalating alarm.**
- Appears unaware of injury or pain*
➤ **Daily body-check routine; model reporting small injuries.**
- Does not recognise signs of illness until severe*
➤ **Teach early body clues (warmth, tiredness, throat feeling scratchy).**



EMOTIONS & INTERNAL SENSATIONS

- Strong reactions to hyper-focused body sensations*
➤ **Use grounding exercises; shift attention outward; normalise body sensations as clues.**
- Emotional reactions seem sudden or “out of the blue”*
➤ **Use regular emotion check-ins; build emotion vocabulary; map triggers to body cues.**
- Finds it difficult to name feelings or body sensations*
➤ **Use visual emotion charts; build awareness through linking sensations to simple labels (fast heart = excited/nervous).**



From Patterns to Practical Support

Use this section if interoception needs were identified as impacting learning, independence, emotional regulation, or becoming more noticeable at specific times.



WHEN INTERNAL SIGNALS BECOME HARDER TO MANAGE...

LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION

- Build routine body check points before lessons
- Offer quiet regulation space before escalation
- Reduce performance pressure when dysregulated
- Use visual “body cue” prompts (hungry? thirsty? toilet? tired?)
- Reduce verbal load if internal discomfort is high

SELF-CARE OR INDEPENDENCE

- Scaffold before expecting insight (“Let’s check your body together”)
- Reduce shame around accidents or forgetfulness
- Schedule proactive toileting rather than waiting for urgency
- Build predictable meal/snack rhythm
- Support temperature awareness (“Is your body warm or cool?”)
- Provide gentle prompts instead of relying on self-initiation

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- Use predictable check-in times
- Teach simple 3-point scale (low / ok / high)
- Model co-regulation before self-regulation
- Pair emotions with body language (“Tight tummy might mean worried”)
- Reduce cognitive talk when body is overwhelmed
- Anticipate escalation after long unmet needs

NEEDS APPEAR MASKED IN SCHOOL

- Embed body check-ins proactively even if child “just manages”
- Notice after-school fatigue, irritability or shutdown
- Avoid assuming independence equals awareness
- Watch for subtle cues (head on desk, slow processing, zoning out)
- Build universal check-in routines across the class
- Reduce end-of-day demands if energy is depleted

INTEROCEPTION NEEDS APPEAR MORE NOTICEABLE...

TRANSITIONS

- Prompt body check before moving
- Use visual previews
- Lower demand immediately after transition
- Use calm countdown before moving environments
- Reduce rushed pacing
- Build snack / drink opportunities before transitions

DURING BUSY OR DEMANDING TIMES

- Pre-empt hunger, thirst, tiredness
- Reduce multitasking
- Offer sensory breaks during long social events
- Avoid delaying toileting due to task demands
- Keep instructions short and repeated calmly
- Provide exit strategy if overwhelmed

AFTER EMOTIONAL STRESS

- Allow decompression
- Avoid immediate problem-solving
- Offer water or snack automatically
- Use grounding (feet on floor, slow breathing, firm chair pressure)
- Validate body response before discussing behaviour/ expecting reflection
- Reduce verbal processing initially
- Expect delayed fatigue

DURING PERIODS OF CHANGE / OUT OF ROUTINE

- Increase predictability of body routines (meals, toilet, rest)
- Use visual schedule
- Lower non-essential expectations
- Build in quiet recovery windows
- Maintain bedtime wind-down consistency
- Provide start and finish cues for new activities
- Anticipate regression in body awareness