



SENSORY POLICY

Guidance for Staff:

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Aims:

At Wilds Lodge School we understand that our children and young people have a range of sensory processing issues, which may impact on their learning and participation. Our aim is to support child and young people to achieve and maintain a calm but alert state, enabling them to engage with and achieve their potential in a range of school activities.

Occupational Therapy:

Wilds Lodge School employs a part-time Occupational Therapist with specialist training in Sensory processing theory and intervention. The Occupational Therapist works closely with teaching, care and therapeutic staff, parents and other professionals to assess each individual child and young persons sensory needs and implement a sensory diet, where appropriate.

A sensory diet is a planned programme of activities designed to meet a child's specific sensory needs. This can include access to specific activities, adapted equipment and environments. Sensory approaches at Wilds Lodge School are embedded within daily classroom and care practice. Sensory diet activities can therefore form part of child and young persons' pen portraits, health support plans and IEP targets.

The following procedures are in place to ensure that the individual sensory needs of children and young people at Wilds Lodge School are met in an appropriate and safe way:

- Occupational Therapists participate in a range of Continuing Professional Development activities to remain up to date with current research and practice;
- All Wilds Lodge staff receives induction training in 'Understanding Sensory Issues in Autism from external or internal training delivered by staff with a particular knowledge and or skill of circuit training, through the Occupational Therapist;
- On going training in sensory issues and approaches is provided to Wilds Lodge staff by the Autism team through INSET sessions, equipment demonstrations and refresher training;
- The Occupational Therapist works class-based in order to observe, trial and monitor children and young peoples' sensory needs and sensory diets;
- The Occupational Therapist meets and liaises regularly with all staff;
- Risk assessments and guidelines are in place regarding the use of sensory approaches, equipment (including weighted equipment) and Therapy rooms.

Use of Sensory Equipment

Each Child and young person at Wilds Lodge School has access to a range of equipment to meet their sensory needs within the classrooms and around the school. In order to ensure that the equipment is used appropriately all staff are advised to:

- Read relevant risk assessments and guidelines before using equipment;
- Refer to Autism Team and or Occupational Therapist for advice and/or demonstration of equipment as needed;
- Check equipment for wear/tear and cleanliness prior to use;

- Report any concerns regarding equipment to the Autism team.

Physical Touch

Many of our children seek out positive touch. This can be in the form of handholding, a reassuring hug, or a deep pressure squeeze, we do not offer or practice any form of massage. All positive touch should be child led and meet the needs of the child at that time (i.e. to calm them, meet their sensory needs or help them to feel secure).

Staff should use their professional judgement as to the needs of the child and what touch is appropriate. Deep pressure techniques, with no direct pressure on the body, but provided through the use of 'flat round cushions or gym ball' can prove highly effective in calming our children. We need to be aware of the appropriateness of this on a number of levels.

- Only adults who know the child and young person well should engage in physical touch techniques:
 - When using deep pressure, between cushions, the child and young person's torso, neck or head should NOT be directly touched, Limbs should only be touched to facilitate comfort and or correct positioning for the child or young person.
 - Staff at Wilds Lodge should use their knowledge of the child or young person to assess whether deep pressure is appropriate,
 - Staff members can refer to Wilds Lodge's Autism team and Occupational Therapist for advice on deep pressure
 - Written consent MUST be obtained from parents/ carers or guardians prior to use of any circuit training, with explicit explanation of the treatment offered. (Appendix a)

CURRICULUM AIMS

- Every child and young person attending Wilds Lodge School has the right to expect that they will be given every opportunity to develop new skills in all subjects in the National Curriculum.
- Each child and young person will be given a broad and balanced range of experiences that will seek to encourage progress and their development
- The sensory room and classroom experience will seek to support the class practices and individual programmes prepared by the Occupational Therapist and Autism practitioners
- The main aim of the staff working in the sensory room will be to promote progress. This will reflect a genuine commitment to valuing the individual for themselves, respecting their age and special needs, and offering the entitlement to make educational progress along a forward and creative continuum.
- The use of the sensory environment will seek to promote the child and young person's progress by concentrating on different routes and methods than those traditionally used in the classroom.
- The sensory environment will seek to encourage the child and young person to become self-motivated and self-directed overcoming any obstacle that an individual or hidden disability may present to the child and young person.
- The sensory environment will exploit the unique attributes of each stimulator (object or person) seeking to provide the child and young person with opportunities that may be difficult to copy in the busy classroom.
- The sensory environment will seek to develop the child and young person's speech and language skills thus seeking to enable, responses to stimuli according to individual need and prompt actions and reactions from their staff

- Staff working in the sensory environment will have access and support from other professionals, for example, Occupational Therapist (OT) Speech and Language Therapist (SALT), Educational Psychologist and Autism practitioners.
- These professionals are able to give specialist advice and support around the best and most effective ways to work with individual pupils. For example, where to position activities, types of activities which sounds and tastes to work with and from which side to work with a pupil

Activities to encourage and assess vision and hearing Sensory diet activities

Sensory learning experiences will also take place outside of the sensory room in other specific environments, in the sensory garden - a garden designed to give a variety of sensory stimuli through each of the senses.

Staff will receive, for the sensory room environment, specific training and work on promoting links with other professionals to enhance their own skills.

FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS

These will be encouraged at all times to extend the child and young persons sensory dictionary, these will concentrate on expanding the child and young persons' ability to choose to:

- Look, listen, and attend.
- Communicate preference (enabling child and young persons control over their environment to influence choice).
- Signal feelings (let others know how to alter their behaviour to take account of the child and young persons).
- Communicate (Relate looking, listening and attending to preference and signalling feelings).
- Play and have fun (enabling the child and young person to interact with others and demonstrate control)
- Link movement to activity/choice/experience.
- Explore the environment around them (help the child and young person to move into the school's world from theirs).

And to move on to the development of:

- Choice and determination (effect changes)
- Spatial awareness (exploring & expanding personal boundaries).
- Language (in a form which can be interpreted and acted upon)
- Logic and likelihood (make, predict and construct changes).

SENSORY COMMUNICATION

The child and young person is assessed by their response when stimulated by various materials. A full range of materials is used to encourage a response from each child and young person. Each child and young person's responses will be different, and can be seen to motivate both staff or child and young person to continue, (with or without support) repeat or communicate, they may include:

VOCAL RESPONSES

Vocal responses which indicate pleasure or displeasure; some child and young persons response may be verbally tell staff using words to indicate what they like and do not like.

FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Child and young persons will indicate their feelings towards a different stimulus for example by smiling, grimacing, semi closure of eyes, frowning, laughing, etc.

PHYSICAL EXPRESSIONS

A child and young person will indicate their feelings towards differing stimulus by, for example, the arching of their back, pushing away, lifting of arms and waving, pulling away individual body parts.

DEGREE OF RESPONSIBILITY

A child and young person will take more and more control over their actions as they become familiar with the activity and have the opportunity to be supported through new and sometimes familiar activities.

ENJOYMENT OR ENGAGEMENT WITH TASK

A child and young persons' level of emotional enjoyment will be noted to help set up an interest base and preferences to be indicated.

PERFORMANCE

A child and young persons' individual progress regarding skill and task acquisition will be encouraged and recorded.

Making choices about what is liked and not liked provides the child and young person with the opportunity to be respected and have a sense of self worth. Using the sensory environment enables the child and young person to have focused provision in an environment that provides little or no distraction, giving the child and young person the opportunity to work in a relaxed, conducive and appropriate atmosphere.

The sensory environment enables staff to use a personal programme, which respects and notes the choices made by the individual. Small groups work together in a different environment than that of the classroom that provides for cooperative activity. Children and young people interact with a specified adult and receive experiences, which encourage a feeling of self worth and achievement. Clear and precise observation of the child and young person's responses enable two-way communications to take place and promotes autonomy and control in an expanding personal world.

Each child and young person has a sensory programme planned that will provide different and creative ways of enabling achievement to take place. This programme will be based a predetermined topic which will promote particular curriculum areas. Evidence of long medium and short term planning will be accounted.

SENSORY DIETS

Sensory diets for each child and young person with a diagnosis of an Autistic Spectrum Disorder or Sensory Processing Disorder have been introduced into school during the year 2014.

The child and young person are assessed for their sensory needs by an Occupational Therapist, Educational Physiologist, Autism practitioners and SENCO. They work closely with the teaching; care and therapy staff teams and the parents/carers to establish the child and young person's patterns of behaviour and then produces a report containing a programme to follow.

The programmes contain examples of the following interventions:

- Weighted blankets for use on laps during lessons.
- Sitting on a wobble cushion during lessons.
- Rolling on or under a peanut ball between breaks in education.
- Twiddle toys.
- Sensory circuits - star jumps, reaching, bending and stretching.
- Ear defenders.
- Chewy tubes.

Any equipment that is recommended for use with a child and young person is trialled and then purchased, according to its success, for individual use:

Skipping ropes
Trampoline

Space hopper
Exercise ball
Hula hoop
Stepping stones
Wobble board
Yoga mats
Bean bags
Step-up/bench

Wilds Lodge promotes and supports young people to become able to self regulate their sensory needs. The Alert programme is used with some pupils to develop their awareness of their sensory needs and ability to change their regulation levels with a sensory strategy. This approach is transferred across the classroom and school environments and parents are encouraged to support these strategies also.

Dear Parents and Carers

At Wilds Lodge School we understand that the children and young people that we care for may have sensory processing issues, which may impact on their learning, interactions and participation. Our aim is to support students to achieve and maintain a calm but alert state, enabling them to positively engage in school / residential activities and to achieve their potential.

We have support from an Occupational Therapist that has specialist training. The Occupational Therapist works closely with school and residential staff, parents and children, young people to assess individual sensory needs and implement a 'sensory diet'.

The concept of a sensory diet is based on the idea that each individual requires a certain amount of activity and sensation to provide them with the 'just right' level of arousal and alertness. A sensory diet can include access to specific activities, adapted equipment and environments. Sensory approaches are designed work within the daily classroom and residential environments. Sensory diet activities can therefore form part of a child's, young person's care and education plans.

- The Occupational Therapist participates in a range of Continuing Professional Development to remain up to date with current research and practice;
- Wilds Lodge staff receive induction training in 'Understanding Sensory Issues' from the OT;
- Wilds Lodge staff receive on going support and training in sensory issues through staff training sessions, demonstration and modelling of techniques, and discussion with OT;
- The Occupational Therapist liaises with staff regularly. Staff are aware of the day that the OT works.
- Whole school sensory strategies are available for staff to access and they are encouraged to be embedded into daily routines.
- Individual sensory diets with more specific activities will be provided for some students and shared with staff.

Sensory Equipment

Children and young people at Wilds Lodge may have access to sensory equipment to meet their sensory needs within the school and residential setting. School and residential staff will be informed of its correct use.

Some students will have specific activities to follow using equipment, such as within a sensory circuit, which meet their specific needs. If an individual program is produced it will be discussed with relevant staff.

All staff should check equipment for wear and tear and for cleanliness prior to using it. Any concerns should be raised with the Occupational Therapist.

Deep Pressure Touch

Deep pressure touch is a positive form of touch. It provides the central nervous system with input to help calm, plan and organise thought processes and bodies better.

- Deep pressure given through shoulders, arms, legs, feet, hands, back and head by a member of staff who has received advice and demonstration from Occupational Therapist.
- Deep pressure given through body using a therapy ball or cushion by a member of staff who has received advice and demonstration from Occupational Therapist.
- Staff should use their knowledge of the child or young person to assess whether the deep pressure input is appropriate.
- Staff members can discuss with the Occupational Therapist for further advice if required.
- Each individual child or young person will require permission from parents for staff to use deep pressure input as part of their therapeutic intervention

Sensory strategies incorporated into daily routines are a valuable way to help children and young people achieve and maintain a calm but alert state so they are ready to engage in daily activities.

Touch is an important part of implementing sensory processing strategies. Touch is essential in order to provide sensitive and good quality care for the children and young people that we support. Used in context, and with empathy, touch supports the development of natural interactions with the children and young people we care for.

If you are happy for your child to engage in sensory input please sign the section in the admission pack. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

Kind regards

The Senior Leadership Team
Wilds Lodge School