



**APPLEBEE WOOD
COMMUNITY
SPECIALIST SCHOOL**

RESPECT | BELONGING | TRUST | RESILIENCE | ASPIRATION

Sensory policy

Rationale

Pupils with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often have sensory processing difficulties. They may seek additional sensory input, or they may avoid sensory experiences. They may present as hyper (over) responsive or hypo (under) responsive to sensations received from the environment. These sensations may be through touch, sight, smell, taste, hearing and movement.

When a pupil has sensory processing difficulties, their opportunity to learn is hindered by increased levels of anxiety or distress. A pupil who is seeking additional sensory input may be constantly moving, touching, making noises. These behaviours may be distracting to themselves and others.

A pupil who avoids sensory experiences e.g tactile activities, misses out crucial areas which are essential to the development of other skills e.g fine motor skills, motor planning and coordination.

A pupil who is hyper sensitive to certain stimuli may become distressed and / or refuse to participate. A pupil who is hypo sensitive may appear uninterested, unmotivated or lethargic. Some pupils may fluctuate between the two extremes without effectively reaching a calm – alert state.

Intent

To ensure that our pupils on the autistic spectrum are able to fully access the curriculum on offer, their needs should be taken into account in all aspects of their daily life.

The aim of this policy is to promote good practice that will help each pupil to achieve a calm alert state within the school setting.

Implementation

Sensory Issues / Environment

Many of our pupils have sensory difficulties which have an impact on their ability to focus on teaching activities, their learning and often their behaviour. These difficulties can cause extreme distress to our pupils. All pupils with a statement of autistic spectrum disorder will be assessed by the Occupational Therapist and, if appropriate, a sensory diet will be developed. Staff will be trained by the Occupational Therapist on the best way to deliver the diet for individual pupils. These sensory lifestyles will be reviewed as appropriate. Many of our pupils also have difficulty with flexibility of thought and require highly organized visual supports to help them understand routines, expectations and emotions. At Applebee Wood we try to reduce environmental anxiety by providing the following:

- A calm, distraction free environment, with a low level of visual and auditory stimulus.
- A high degree of visual and physical structure to the day.
- A curriculum that provides pupils with the opportunity to learn how to self-regulate their emotions and behaviour using Zones of regulation.

- The SPELL approach (a Structured, Positive, Empathic and Low-arousal environment with good links between home, school and outside agencies).
- A mix of established approaches and interventions drawing on best practice. The interventions include Zones of regulation, TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children), PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) Intensive Interaction and Attention Autism.

Training

In service training and good practice is shared via the Occupational Therapist and staff in specific ASD classes. All staff are encouraged to source relevant training to further their knowledge and skills both internally and externally, via workshops and courses.

Roles and Responsibilities

Intervention co-coordinator Mr Branford is responsible for:

- Ensuring each pupil has a sensory profile/lifestyle where applicable
- Ensuring each pupil has a sensory plan / programme where applicable.
- Ensuring the sensory policy is reviewed and amended in line with policy procedure.

All staff are responsible for:

- Following the rules and procedures designed for safe working and making themselves familiar with health and safety at work legislation.
- Taking part in training designed to meet the requirements of the policy
- Ensuring they are competent and up to date with the sensory needs of their pupils.
- Reporting any skill deficit to their line manager.
- Implementing sensory advice and programmes set by the Occupational Therapist and overseen by the ASD / sensory coordinator.

Impact

Effectiveness of the policy and our practice will be measured by the number of occasions when sensory diets are being delivered by staff which will result in pupils being more prepared to access everyday activities and the curriculum.

Reviewed by: Mr Branford (SENCO) September 2023 Review September 2024

Person responsible: Mrs M Padgeon (Headteacher)