

# Sensory Behaviours in School

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This leaflet explores **Sensory Processing: affecting how and why children may behave inside and outside of the classroom. It includes some tips for helping a child to regulate their arousal, participate in the classroom and enjoy learning.**

## Sensory Processing

Every child and adult processes sensory information in a unique way. Some children may enjoy loud noises and bright lights, and will move their bodies a lot. Others may avoid sounds and lights, and will want to keep still. How a child processes and responds to sensory information will affect how well they engage with an activity, especially learning and play. This is why it is important to understand when a child has difficulty processing sensory information, and to explore what you can do to support them, or whether they would benefit from an Occupational Therapy referral.



## Sensory Reactivity: Over and Under reactive

While we all have sensory preferences, and will avoid or seek certain things, an individual can be over-reactive to sensory stimuli (they are especially sensitive to sounds, smells, lights etc.) or under-reactive (they struggle to register sounds, smells, lights etc.). This can have an impact on their arousal, which may cause them to struggle to maintain attention and focus on a task.



### Arousal

Regulating arousal is very important in helping a child to engage with learning and play.

If a child is over-reactive, they may avoid certain sensory stimuli which they find overwhelming. If they are under-reactive, they may seek certain sensory stimuli. They do this in order to regulate their arousal.

## What you can do

It is important to know the child and their sensory preferences. If a child is over-reactive, you may be able to help them regulate by providing a quiet space for them to rest, or encourage them to use ear defenders, weighted vests etc. if they have access to these.

If they are under-reactive, it may be helpful to introduce movement breaks or sensory circuits, allow them to spend time on a bouncy ball in between tasks, or use fidget toys.

## Things to consider

- A child's sensory reactivity may fluctuate (they may be over-reactive to some things while under-reactive to others).
- It is important not to stop the child from engaging in seeking/avoiding behaviours (unless these are dangerous) without introducing a different activity to help them regulate.
- Every child is different. What may work for some children, may not work for others.

Further help and advice.....

<https://www.sensoryintegration.org.uk/what-is-si>

<https://occupationaltherapychildren.com.au/we-have-skills/what-is-sensory-integration-therapy/>

<https://www.sensory-processing-disorder.com/problem-behavior-in-the-classroom.html>

If you would like to refer a child to our Occupational Therapy service for further support, please discuss this with a child's parents who will need to seek a referral via their GP.

**If you have any further questions please contact the Newberry Child Development Centre on the number below:**

**01493 442322 during the hours of 08:00 and 16:00 Monday to Friday.**

## Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible. Please talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/ department staff are unable to resolve your concern, please ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care. **Before you leave the hospital you will be asked to complete a Friends and Family Test feedback card.** Providing your feedback is vital in helping to transform NHS services and to support patient choice.

## Trust Values

Courtesy and respect

- A welcoming and positive attitude
- Polite, friendly and interested in people
- Value and respect people as individuals  
So people feel **welcome**

Attentively kind and helpful

- Look out for dignity, privacy & humanity
- Attentive, responsive & take time to help
- Visible presence of staff to provide care  
So people feel **cared for**

Responsive communication

- Listen to people & answer their questions
- Keep people clearly informed
- Involve people  
So people feel **in control**

Effective and professional

- Safe, knowledgeable and reassuring
- Effective care / services from joined up teams
- Organised and timely, looking to improve  
So people feel **safe**



The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

**For a large print version of this leaflet, contact PALS 01493 453240**