**Sensory Checklist-** adapted from Winnie Dunn, Short Sensory profile available from [www.pearsonclinical.co.uk](http://www.pearsonclinical.co.uk/)

Please refer to ‘The Sensory Sensitive Classroom (available from the team) for a detailed description of sensory processing needs and more precise checklists should you require them. This checklist has been developed from a short questionnaire for children ages 3–14 years. Items on this questionnaire, which have been slightly adapted to fit a school setting are highly discriminating and provide quick information for screening.

**Introduction**

Children and young people on the autism spectrum often experience sensory processing issues that may present in a number of ways. The impact of these sensory sensitivities can be significant, and what can be perceived as inappropriate behaviour, may be a sensory response to an uncomfortable stimulus- ‘see behaviour, think sensory’.

We have 7 different sensory systems, and a child may experience processing difficulties in one or more systems:

**Tactile (touch) Gustatory (taste) Olfactory (smell) Visual (sight) Auditory (hearing)**

**Proprioceptive (body awareness) Vestibular (movement/balance)**

The following checklist will give you an idea of where a child or young person might be experiencing a sensory sensitivity- it is not a diagnostic tool but provides a quick ‘snapshot’. It may help to pinpoint any areas of need, to support staff to plan strategies for the child and young person.

Instructions: Please tick the box that best describes the frequency with which the child or young person does the following.

Please use the following key to mark your responses-

Always- when presented with the opportunity the child always responds in this way 100% of the time.

Frequently- 75%

Occasionally- 50%

Seldom- 25%

Never- 0%

Please score according to the following numbers:

1 = Always

2 = Frequently

3 = Occasionally

4 = Seldom

5 = Never

The lower a score in an area, the greater the likelihood the child may be experiencing a difficulty.

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| **A Tactile sensitivity/defensiveness:**  Child or young person may be uncomfortable with light touch and can become upset / aggressive or experience a meltdown if touched unexpectedly. | | | | | | |
| **Item** | **Over (hyper) sensitive to touch** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1 | Experiences anxiety and meltdowns during grooming e.g. cutting finger nails and hair cuts. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2 | Wears inappropriate clothes for the weather e.g. long sleeves in hot weather |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 | Avoids going barefoot, especially in sand or grass. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4 | Reacts emotionally or aggressively to touch. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5 | Avoids unpredictable tactile experiences e.g. splashing water or messy activities. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6 | Has difficulty lining up for assembly and after playtimes etc. Dislikes being close to peers. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7 | Seems overly sensitive to touch- will complain they are hurt after the slightest knock. |  |  |  |  |  |
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|  | Total score /35  Any comments to add: | | | | | |

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| **B Gustatory and Olfactory sensitivity:**  Child or young person may be avoidant of certain tastes and smells upset / aggressive or experience a meltdown if touched unexpectedly. | | | | | | |
| **Item** | **Over (hyper) sensitive to Taste and Smell** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 8 | Avoids certain tastes or food smells- will wretch and gag |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9 | Will only eat certain food. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10 | Limited diet around certain texture and temperature. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11 | Picky eater. |  |  |  |  |  |
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| Any comments to add: Score /20 | | | | | | |

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| **Vestibular/Movement Sensitivity:** Child or young person may be overly cautious about movement and may avoid situation or become anxious e.g. during P.E. | | | | | | |
| **Item** | **Vestibular Sensitivity** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 12 | Becomes anxious when feet leave the ground. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 13 | Fears falling or heights. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 14 | Dislikes doing being upside down in play e.g. cartwheels or in gym. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Any comments to add: Score /15 | | | | | | |

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| **Sensory Seeking** Child or young person seeks sensory input- frequently ‘on the go’, active and excitable. | | | | | | |
| **Item** | **Sensation Seeking** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 15 | Noisy- likes making noise and seeks out noise. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 16 | Seeks out movement- constantly moving. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 17 | Easily excitable when doing an active/movement task. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 18 | Constantly touching people and objects in their environment. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 19 | Doesn’t notice when their face or hands are messy. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 20 | Constantly on the go- moving from activity to activity. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 21 | Clothing often inappropriately worn and twisted. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Any comments to add: Score /35 | | | | | | |

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| **Auditory Filtering** The child is easily distracted by loud or extraneous noise. | | | | | | |
| **Item** | **Auditory Filtering** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 22 | Finds it hard to focus or appears anxious when it is noisy- dislikes the hall, corridors etc. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 23 | Appears to not hear what is said. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 24 | Finds it hard to focus with background noise e.g. noise of interactive whiteboard projector. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 25 | Dislikes noisy tasks. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 26 | Doesn’t respond to their name (hearing has been checked) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 27 | Has difficulty paying attention. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Any comments to add: Score /30 | | | | | | |

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| **Proprioception - body awareness** The child appears slouched or lethargic. | | | | | | |
| **Item** | **Low energy** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 28 | Seems to have weak muscles. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 29 | Tires easily especially when standing. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 30 | Has a weak grasp. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 31 | Can’t lift heavy objects in comparison to peers. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 32 | Needs to lean and prop to support self e.g. during carpet time. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 33 | Poor endurance/tires easily. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Any comments to add: Score 28/30 | | | | | | |

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| **Visual/ Auditory Sensitivity**  The child or young person may find bright lights uncomfortable. They may use vision as a stimulus. The child or young person may hum constantly (either to block out extraneous noise or because he is seeking auditory input). | | | | | | |
| **Item** | **Visual/ Auditory Sensitivity** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 34 | Responds negatively to unexpected loud noises such as hand dryers |  |  |  |  |  |
| 35 | Holds hands over ears to protect from sound. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 36 | Is bothered by bright lights. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 37 | Watches everyone when they move around the room. |  |  |  |  |  |
| 38 | Covers eyes or squints to protect eyes from light. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Any comments to add: Score /25 | | | | | | |

**Total Score /190**

\*A total score of 154 and below indicates an overall difference in sensory processing- for more detail regarding the scoring in each subsection please refer to the Short Sensory Profile (Winnie Dunn) available to purchase from [www.pearsonclinical.co.uk](http://www.pearsonclinical.co.uk/)

**Sensory Seeking**

It is essential that regulating activities are integrated into the school day at regular intervals. These are not rewards and should be regular according to need.

* Have plenty movement breaks throughout the day.
* Allow the child to play with a fidget toy whilst working and listening.
* Provide the child with a ‘Movin’sit’ cushion or allow them to sit on a therapy ball during periods when intense concentration is required.

Proprioception is achieved from active use of the muscles e.g. pulling, pushing, and carrying. It is also obtained from active movement (that is propelled by child) e.g. running, climbing, jumping. Try to incorporate proprioceptive activities regularly during the school day e.g. before a table top or sedentary activity:

* Table/ Wall pushes (these are good to do within class)
* Carrying a box or bag (heavy) of toys or work for next activity
* Moving/Chair, rearranging furniture.
* Sitting on an air cushion e.g. Movin’Sit Cushion or therapy ball.
* Pushing/pulling boxes with heavier items in (you could make box into a ‘car’ or ship with rope to pull along)
* Riding vehicles e.g. tricycles, bicycles & scooters
* Jumping on trampette (could have in corner of classroom or soft area).
* Sitting bouncing on therapy ball with feet flat on the floor and/or support
* from adults at hips
* Using a space hopper
* Swimming.
* Gardening.
* For older children gym work, rock climbing, martial arts, boxing.
* Tug of war (can be done in sitting or high kneeling)
* Use chubby pencils/pencil grips for pupils with difficulties holding pencil.
* Making and flying kites.
* Making bread.
* Threading beads etc.

**Auditory Filtering and Auditory Sensitivity**

* Shut doors or windows to reduce external noise.
* Pre-warn the child before any tests of the fire alarm system.
* Allow the child to use headphones whilst working.
* Ear plugs or defenders might help in situations such as assembly hall/dinner/shopping centre
* During assembly ensure the child is seated at the end of a row, next to the teacher/adult
* Reduce the amount of electrical equipment used during times of

concentration.

* The noise of a pencil on paper can be uncomfortable and the child may prefer to use a ballpoint pen.
* If the child needs to hum to concentrate, teach them to do so quietly.

Position them in class where they less distracting to others.

* Giving the child a vibrating toy to hold in this hand whilst working, or

allowing him to sit on a vibrating cushion can reduce the degree of humming.

* Allow pupils to listen with headphones to music they enjoy.
* Allow pupils to cover their ears if necessary.
* Offer a less noisy alternative to work, if possible (either a less noisy spot in the same place e.g. a corner of the classroom/hall or sometimes a different place if available).
* Make allowances for difficult transition periods e.g. allow the child to move somewhere a few minutes earlier.
* Give the pupil the opportunity to hear instructions for a task again.
* Provide quiet ‘chill out’ spaces in class e.g. the book corner and ‘zoned’ playground.
* Use visual cues to indicate desired noise e.g. ‘noise-o-meter’ with traffic light colours.
* Carpeted classrooms minimise extraneous noises.
* Consider getting a ‘white noise’ machine, tabletop rocks-and-water fountain,or aquarium in class.
* White, pink and brown noise is available free from www.simplynoise.com and this can be helpful for children who struggle with loud noises.
* Get outside the classroom in nature and listen. Create a sound map- mark ‘x’ in the middle of the paper where you are and over the course of a minute try to ‘map’ different sounds.

**Visual Sensitivity**

* Keep classroom/home environment as clutter-free as possible.
* Ensure that trays and workbooks are clearly labelled.
* Natural light is a better option than strip lighting, both from a visual and

auditory perspective, so avoid artificial light sources if it is a bright day.

* Allow the child to wear a cap or sunglasses; if not allowed in class then at

least allow him to use in the playground and for PE classes being held

outside.

* Use visual cues to promote good behaviour.
* Use exaggerated facial expressions when necessary.
* Use visual timetables/ personalised schedules appropriately with the pupils so they are meaningful and pupils refer to them regularly.
* Consider coloured acetate strips for reading (‘reading rulers’- available from Cross Bow)
* Use buff coloured paper for handouts. (It reduces the glare).
* Reduce fluorescent lighting by using deep coloured light bulbs instead.
* Consider introducing a ‘work station’ to reduce visual distractions.
* Colour code schedules