

Remarkable Autism Ltd
The Autism Specialists

Sensory Policy Statement
February 2025

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This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

1.	Therapy Policy
2.	Accessibility Policy
3.	Ascent SEND Policy
4.	WHS Send policy
5.	Behaviour Support Policy

Change History Record

Current Version	Previous Version	Summary of changes made	Section Heading & Page Number
Feb 25	Aug 22	Update to new branding	

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Introduction

Supporting all of our learner's sensory needs and differences: enabling them to participate in living and learning activities to their full potential.

Sensory processing is the ability to take in, recognise and adapt to sensory information from our body and the environment. Sensory processing helps us to make sense of the world around us and underpins every aspect of healthy development, function, participation, learning and psychological well-being.

Sensory processing differences demonstrated by over-responding or under-responding to sensory stimulation (Miller et al., 2007), are frequently observed as a feature of autism. Many autistic individuals have difficulty achieving and maintaining a calm-alert state which impacts upon their ability to engage in living and learning activities.

Anxiety can present as a significant feature of autism (Muris et al, 1998). Anxiety interferes with the calm-alert state – it can exacerbate and/or be exacerbated by sensory processing differences which in turn will impact upon an individual's ability to access learning and activities of daily living.

In his description of the activation of the anxiety system, Gray (1982) explains that when expectation matches experience, behavioural inhibition kicks in. If however, the experience does not match the expectation, anxiety increases, and arousal is heightened. Stress reducing strategies including preparing learners for change and transition; teaching relaxation and anxiety management as a life skill and recognising and reducing individual's potential stressors play a vital role in helping individuals to be ready for learning.

An embedded therapy approach supports long term sustainable change and will support the development of integration of all 8 sensory systems – visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, vestibular, proprioceptive and interoceptive. The integration of all these senses enables each individual to develop what Longhorn (1995), describes as an 'intermodal' or multi-sensory approach, which can be utilised by the child in all learning situations.

An in-depth knowledge of individual learner, their specific sensory needs and differences is therefore crucial in ensuring that they are ready and able to access all aspects of daily life. The purpose of this document is to provide details of how Remarkable uses a holistic approach to ensure that learners and students individual sensory processing differences are understood and taken into account in the process of their learning and well-being.

Policy

The purpose of this policy is to describe how the sensory needs of every learner and student at Remarkable are identified and met.

Through specific training, assessment, intervention and a variety of sensory approaches, Remarkable aims to:

- Educate staff, carers, parents, learners and students regarding sensory functioning and its impact upon emotional regulation, levels of alertness and links to learning.
- Provide opportunities for learners and students to get ready for learning.
- Provide opportunities for learners to access sensory diet activities as prescribed by a Specialist Occupational Therapists.
- Empower learners and students by educating around self-regulation.
- Facilitate the development of language, cognitive and social skills by providing a communicative and sensory enriched environment with specific activities which stimulate and integrate the senses.
- Enable learners to explore and employ a variety of relaxation techniques.
- To improve learners' and students' confidence in accessing new environments and activities that may challenge hyper and hypo sensitivities.
- Recognise that behaviours of concern may have a sensory function and consider this when devising and implementing Positive Behaviour Support Plans.

Roles and Responsibilities

Embedded practice is key to effectively supporting learners and students in successfully accessing their education. Sensory approaches have proven to be very successful in the differentiation of tasks for those learners who have more severe learning and/or additional attention difficulties. Such individuals require a wider range of learning experiences to hold their attention, build concepts and consolidate learning. Fortunately, sensory approaches can be employed in every area of the education curriculum and are therefore used as a means of access during specific lessons, as well as in scheduled sensory sessions where many of the activities link in with different curriculum areas. This required joint working between the Occupational Therapy (OT) and education teams.

The **Occupational Therapist** is responsible for identifying each student's sensory functioning as part of the baseline assessment. The OT team will provide sensory advice and/or a sensory diet as appropriate; along with training to ensure all staff working with the learner/student, parents and

carers are familiar with their individual needs and how to effectively support them.

Each learner/student's sensory functioning and needs will be reviewed by the OT as part of the annual review process– or more regularly if significant changes/needs are identified.

Class Staff are responsible for making themselves familiar with the advice, for seeking clarification where necessary, and for ensuring any sensory advice is adhered to throughout the day. This including facilitating access to sensory diets as prescribed, alongside embedded sensory activities and programmes as appropriate.

Procedure

The sensory needs and differences of all learners at Remarkable are addressed using a 'bottom up' approach. Bottom-up assessments tend to examine small, separate components of a person's skills – analysing and helping to address the underlying causes and effects of any difficulties/differences.

Assessment

Upon joining one of Remarkable's services, each new learner/student's sensory functioning is identified by the Occupational Therapist as part of their baseline assessment.

Information is gathered from preadmission documentation, parents/caregivers, school staff and, where possible, the learner/student themselves.

The Occupational Therapist uses formal sensory questionnaires and assessments as well as conducting clinical observations during individual and group sessions, to highlight any functional or behavioural difficulties which may be caused or exacerbated by underlying sensory issues.

All of the information is then summarised within the baseline report along with recommendations for intervention where required.

Intervention

Recommended interventions may include embedded practice or direct work with the OT team within the classroom or a designated therapy space. Targets will be set that link to the EHCP long term outcomes and support sensory processing and regulation skills development.

Embedded practice

Training for staff and parents/carers is key to ensuring a 24-hour approach to addressing sensory needs of our learners and students.

The OT team will provide annual training around sensory integration and sensory processing for staff. This will also include training and advice on the use of self-regulation programmes and approaches that support learners and students to:

- Effectively identify their own emotions and arousal states
- Recognise changes in their own arousal levels
- Identify triggers for changes in their arousal state
- Develop strategies to effectively support them in changing their arousal state.

Staff will also be supported by the OT team to set up and run sensory circuits which are designed to provide sensory experiences which support regulation.

Similar workshops for parents will also be provided on a regular basis with links to online resources and communities to be shared when appropriate.

Individualised recommendations for support will be provided by the Occupational Therapist where required.

This may include the provision of sensory support sheet outlining a range of strategies, aids and adaptations that can be made within the learning environment to effectively address the individual's identified sensory needs and support maintenance of a calm alert state.

For those with higher level of needs a more formal sensory diet may be provided which outline sensory activities to be used at scheduled times throughout the day. As well as prescribed activities to be completed in preparation for/following specific activities e.g. prior to access transport, after using the bathroom.

Direct input

For learners and students in receipt of targeted or intensive therapy packages direct input will also be provided. This may be in the form of class-based sessions, group work or 1:1s in a designated therapy space. Class based sessions will be focused on, modelling of strategies and approaches outlined in the sensory support sheets and sensory diets, and the implementation of multisensory learning experiences.

The interoception curriculum can be facilitated in 1:1 or groups and delivered by members of the OT or Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) team. This

aims to empower learners and students to understand their own inner experiences, body signals and emotions so they can better self-regulate.

Other 1:1 sessions will focus on Sensory Integration (SI) therapy which is an intervention designed to help individuals with a sensory processing disorder by exposing them to sensory stimulation in a structured repetitive way. Remarkable will support training for OT staff in SI to ensure they are appropriately qualified to effectively support sensory needs of learners and students. Ayres Sensory Integration Therapy® (ASI) is a very specific intervention which can only be provided by a trained ASI practitioner with a post graduate qualification in ASI theory.

Outcome Measures

Evaluation is ongoing. Informal observations take place during structured therapy sessions, in class-based sessions and in the community. The Education staff are responsible for ensuring that learners' sensory recommendations are followed and for liaison with the OT team regarding sensory issues, classroom environment and equipment. Advice may also be reviewed and updated following liaison with parents. Other than this, sensory advice is updated annually as part of the annual review process. Response to intervention can be monitored using termly outcomes. OTs use assessment findings and outcome measures to recommend any relevant amendments to the provision of therapy to meet EHCP outcomes regarding sensory integration.

Policy Impact

We have a rolling programme for reviewing our Company policies. We regularly review the impact of our policies on the needs, entitlements and outcomes for students, service users, staff and parents.

References and Further Resources

Gray, J. A. (1982) **The Neurophysiology of Anxiety**. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Longhorn, F. (1995) **A Sensory Curriculum for Very Special People**. Souvenir Press

Muris P, Steerneman P, Merckelbach H, Holdrinet I, Meesters C (1998) **Comorbid Anxiety Symptoms in Children with Pervasive Development Disorders**. Journal of Anxiety Disorders. 12:387-393

Murry-Slutsky, C & Paris, B. (2005) **Is It Sensory or Is It Behaviour? Behaviour Problem Identification. Assessment and Intervention**. San Antonio, TX: Psychological Corporation.