



How your child with **Sensory Processing Disorder** is supported in school



Information for parents and carers

This leaflet provides examples of what you and your child can expect from schools through the graduated approach for supporting Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).



Sensory processing is the way the nervous system receives messages from the senses and turns them into motor (movement) and behavioural responses. Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) exists when these messages are either not detected or don't get organised into appropriate responses.

Symptoms of SPD fall into a broad spectrum. Most of us have occasional difficulties processing sensory information but for a child with SPD these difficulties can significantly disrupt everyday life.

If your child has SPD they will face challenges in performing many everyday tasks. They may:

- be overly sensitive to stimulation, for example they may overreact to, or not like, touch, noise, smells, etc.
- be easily distracted in the classroom, often out of his/her seat.
- be easily overwhelmed in the playground, during break time and in class.
- be slow to start and complete tasks.
- have difficulty with fine motor tasks such as handwriting.
- appear clumsy.
- slouch in their chair.
- seek rough play such as tackling/wrestling games.
- be slow to learn new activities.
- be constantly moving or fidgeting.
- have difficulty making friends.
- have difficulty changing from one activity to another.
- find changes to the normal routine hard to cope with.
- confuse similar sounding words.
- misinterpret questions or requests.
- have difficulty reading, especially aloud.
- stumble over words when they are speaking.
- feel anxious and have difficulty managing their emotions

The type and level of support required will depend on your child's needs. Most children with SPD can make progress at school when the right support is in place.

Quality First Teaching

Quality First Teaching is high quality teaching which provides appropriate learning opportunities to all pupils, whatever their individual needs. It is the first step of the graduated approach in responding to pupils who have, or may have, SEND. Staff knowledge and understanding of SEND is a key factor to Quality First Teaching.

All staff are also required to have knowledge and understanding of the SEND Code of Practice 2014 and The Equalities Act 2010.

You will be involved in decisions about your child at every stage of the graduated approach and all staff who come into contact with your child should be made aware of their needs and given strategies to cope with them.

Examples of what might be expected from this level of school support:

- All school staff have an awareness of SPD
- Consistent routines and boundaries will be set.
- Your child will have opportunities to experience success and be given praise
- Seating arrangements and where personal belongings are kept will be considered so that your child can manage normal daily activities in school.



- Environmental considerations will be taken into account, such as the lighting, noise, colour of background of power points etc.
- Adjustments to school uniform if required.
- Opportunities for your child to have breaks or sensory activities during the day.
- Use of fidget toys.
- Additional support for motor skills; motor tasks such as handwriting, PE or sports activities and getting changed may be adapted and additional adult support may be available at those times.
- Activities and tasks will be provided to meet your child's needs and abilities.
- Support in class for times when the pace of learning may be too fast.
- Use different styles of teaching, such as multi-sensory, visual or practical learning to meet your child's needs.
- Where necessary, additional time is given to process language and complete tasks
- flexible grouping for different activities, for example smaller groups for areas of the curriculum where your child needs more adult support
- Provide visual timetables and visual task boards or checklists.
- Give instructions in small steps and visuals or objects used to help your child understand what to do.
- The classroom will be clearly labelled so that resources are easy to find and your child can learn to be independent.
- Staff will understand that your child's social and emotional well-being may be affected by their sensory processing
- Planned support for times when there is going to be a change to the normal school routine.
- Regular contact between you and the school
- some children with a sensory processing disorder may have already had involvement from other professionals such as Occupational Therapy, a paediatrician or Durham County Council SEND and Inclusion Team. School staff may have attended training or received advice about how to meet your child's needs at a Quality First Teaching level

SEN support

Some children will require SEN support which should be additional to or different from what schools provide for all pupils.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and the teacher will work with you and your child to create a SEN support plan which should be reviewed three times a year. This will be based around your child's strengths and needs and will identify outcomes for your child that will be agreed with you.

It will be important to identify the main characteristic of your child's need (primary need). However, support plans will identify all the needs of your child within these four broad areas:

- Cognition and Learning
- Social, Emotional and mental health
- Communication and Interaction
- Sensory and Physical

Targeted SEN support might include:

- a specialist teacher from the SEND and Inclusion Team to provide further advice on how to meet your child's needs in school
- more individualised support from Occupational Therapy



- a quiet area in school for your child to have regular breaks from the busy classroom
- sensory diet if required
- modified classroom environment
- structured teaching approaches, such as the use of checklists and chunking of tasks to help your child remember what to do and in what order
- tasks tailored to your child's needs and broken down into small steps
- a personalised reward system
- alternative strategies may be needed to help your child record their work in class, including the use of technology
- using key adults in school to build strong, positive relationships with your child, and facilitate conversations with them about their school experiences
- support for your child to develop their social and emotional skills, for example a social skills programme delivered regularly in a small group
- planned support to enable your child to develop self-care skills and independence
- multi-agency meetings such as Team Around the Family as appropriate



Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC Plan)

Before a school can apply for a statutory assessment of your child's needs they must do all they can to support your child and must be able to show that they have taken 'sufficient relevant and purposeful action'. You and your child will be the focus of the assessment process. The assessment will provide valuable information to help decide the most appropriate support for your child, and may result in an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan).

If your child has an EHC Plan:

- Staff will be trained to appropriate levels
- The support for your child will be detailed in the EHC Plan and your child will have individual learning programme
- Teachers will have access to specialist advice
- Teaching styles and resources will be modified as required and may include a highly structured and predictable approach
- Teaching will focus on the curriculum **and** social and emotional skills
- The environment will be modified wherever possible; sensory diets in place
- A personalised timetable may be required with alternative opportunities at KS4
- Support will be planned for your child to develop independence and self-help skills
- Individual support for break and lunch times may be put in place
- We will undertake careful planning when your child is moving to the next stage of education (transition)
- We will undertake an annual statutory review in addition to termly reviews

Additional Support

The Local Offer

Information for parents and carers on a broad range of SEN and disability issues and support can be found on the Local Offer website. SEN planning tools can also be found in the 'for providers' section of the website.

www.countydurhamfamilies.info/localoffer

Telephone 03000 26 99 95

Durham SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

Durham SENDIASS supports parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and children and young people with SEND. All services provided are confidential and impartial.

Email sendiass@durham.gov.uk

Telephone 03000 267 003

Making Changes Together

Making Changes Together (MCT) is a group for parents and carers of children with SEND. MCT work with professionals in County Durham to improve services for children and young people with SEND.

www.mctdurham.co.uk

Telephone 0191 587 3541

Durham County Council's Portage Service

The Portage Service is a home-based teaching service for pre-school children with additional support needs, and their families.

Telephone 03000 263 350

Telephone 0191 587 3541

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