

IKB Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Information

In each information leaflet, we will be looking at a different special educational need and providing some 'go to' links for our families. The reasons for this are multiple:

- **To support families who have a child already diagnosed/ or are in the process of being diagnosed, with this need.**
- **To educate the wider school community, about the wide-ranging special educational needs that we both experience and support at IKB.**
- **To continue building a school community that is knowledgeable, inclusive and supportive towards all children with SEND at IKB.**

This week's focus is: **Sensory Processing:**

Overview – We use our sensory systems to understand the world around us. We process information through our senses and decide on how to respond to the things we are experiencing. Sensory systems that absorb information about the world around us are:

- Sight
- Taste (gustatory)
- Smell (olfactory)
- Hearing (auditory)
- Touch (tactile)
- Proprioception (using our muscles to understand where our body is in space)
- Vestibular (the sense of how the body moves against gravity)

Examples of behaviours that may indicate sensory processing are:

- **Running out of busy places when there are lots of visuals and/ or sounds present.** This may be a child who cannot cope with processing so many different things at one time.
- **Seeking lots of physical movement through the day.** This may be a child who needs more information into their muscles and movement systems, to tell them where they are in space.
- **Sensitivity to light touch.** Your child may be very sensitive to unexpected or light touch and have an anxious response to it.
- **Seeking heavy touch and hugs.** Your child may seek lots of heavy touch, through hugs for example, to get more input to their touch system. This can be calming for them.
- **Difficulty with posture and co-ordination.** This may represent a child whose muscle and movement systems are not as efficient.
- **Being overloaded by visual or sound input.** This may affect their ability to concentrate.

Things to think about - Consider patterns of behaviour. Reasons may be many and varied, but among them may be some of the following:

- Your child may be trying to feed a sensory system that they are not so good at registering

- You may also find that if your child receives too many stimuli, they reach an overload state and this can lead to a state of high anxiety
- Often children instinctively know what they need, and may be giving you clues as to what sensory input they are seeking, or what they are unable to cope with
- Think about what things your child may be sensitive to; such as light touch or hair brushing
- If your child is seeking more input, see if there are ways to support your child through sensory based activities that 'feed' sensory needs in the right way (e.g. movement breaks between sedentary activities)
- You may find that your child seeks certain sensory stimulation – this may be an attempt to 'kick start' a system that is not as active as the child needs it to be
- Challenging behaviour can have a sensory based cause, but can increase with secondary gains (e.g. avoiding an activity). It can be challenging to work out what is motivating a child to display these behaviours, and what has become more important as an additional gain for the child. Sometimes it helps just to try and understand why a child may behave in the way that they do. Looking at behaviours using a sensory viewpoint can help you to understand why your child reacts to certain things (e.g. sensitivity to clothing).

Some recognised symptoms of Sensory Processing:

- a high pain threshold
- bumping into walls
- touching things
- putting things into their mouth
- giving bear hugs
- crashing into other people or things

If you have noted ongoing sensory seeking/ sensory avoidant behaviours and are concerned for your child, I would recommend the following:

- write them all down, including what/ when/ triggers/ age begun/ etc
- speak to your child's class teacher. Have they noticed them? What in-class support might be needed? Follow up with them a few weeks later
- If your child's sensory behaviour is challenging for you at home/ school, you might want to consider asking for some additional support from Occupational Therapy/ Parent Family Support Advisors/ school nurse – do not hesitate to communicate to myself or Mrs Hawkins if necessary.

Remember – if your child does have sensory processing, then this will be a life-long challenge for them. There is, however, absolutely no reason for them not to learn to manage it over time, with support if necessary, and consequently reach their full potential.

Useful Links:

- [Somerset Sensory Processing Handbook launched](#)
- [Sensory Processing | Specialist services | Occupational therapy services for children and young people | Services A-Z | Services | The Royal Free](#)
- [Sensory processing | Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust \(kentcht.nhs.uk\)](#)

If you have any questions or concerns relating to your child, regarding sensory processing, then do please contact our SEND team via the school office.

Mr Healey

IKB Headteacher and Primary Executive Headteacher of The Castle Partnership Trust