

## Early Years Team

### Sensory Environmental Audit for PVI Early Years Settings

#### How to conduct an Environmental Audit

- Evaluate the current situation and identify areas that require change
- Verify the information you collected on your environmental audit e.g., check lighting reflections on the whiteboard at different times during the day
- Check which issues increase a child's sensory sensitivities.
- Both staff and parents can provide information about factors that impact particular children.
- Children can provide information: consider using observations at different times of the day/week to identify sensitivities. If developmentally appropriate, talk to the child about how they feel e.g., have pictures of different areas (e.g., cloakroom or dinner hall). Ask the child 'how does this make you feel?'
- Create an action plan for addressing changes e.g., by the end of week 2, I will have created a quiet, low arousal space.
- Monitor changes throughout the week e.g., did this change impact on the child's behaviours?
- An environmental audit does not cover all aspects. It provides ideas on the ways in which a setting might be altered when children experience sensory processing difficulties and/or find it difficult or overwhelming to tolerate certain sensations or situations.
- If you are unsure of what possible actions are needed, or need any other advice when completing this audit, please contact your Area SENCo.

# Education and inclusion

VISUAL		
Things to consider	Current situation	Possible action if needed
Are there any flickering lights? Eg: Do any light bulbs need changing to reduce this?		
Does the room have natural light? Are lights switched off when not needed? (i.e. natural light used where possible.)		
Are children often in direct sunlight? Are there blinds? Are they used when needed? Are children positioned out of direct sun light? (Especially those not yet mobile.)		
Are there any bright, flickering lights or patterns created by light shining on metal or shiny objects? Can they be re-positioned?		
Is the room tidy and uncluttered? Is there enough storage to enable this?		
Are surfaces clear? Is there enough storage to enable this?		
Is there a clear 'pathway' for children to walk/move through nursery?		
Are there busy and cluttered wall displays? Are they over stimulating ... multicoloured?		
Is there one wall with minimal displays/distractions near group learning area (i.e. carpet area) to help children focus on adult?		

# Education and inclusion

Is the room calm without too many bright or clashing visual stimuli?		
Is there a place children can go if they become visually overwhelmed? i.e. a quiet or low arousal space or low light area.		
When the children are outside, are there any areas that offer shade?		
<b>NOISE/SOUNDS</b>		
<b>Things to consider</b>	<b>Current situation</b>	<b>Possible action if needed</b>
Are there furnishings in place to reduce unnecessary sound in the environment? i.e. carpets, rugs, pads on bottom of chair legs etc		
Can you hear noise from outside the room? i.e. passing traffic, children passing the room, or the sound of children from other rooms etc. Can doors windows be closed to reduce noise?		
Have you identified noisier time of the day? i.e. when children are arriving/leaving or at lunch times.		
Are there quiet places available for children to go to if overwhelmed?		
Is background music played in the room? Do staff consider/understand its possible impact on some children?		

# Education and inclusion

Are staff mindful of noise levels of the other children? How do staff monitor and manage the noise level?		
Is there noise from electrical equipment? Is all electrical equipment within the room switched off when not in use? Are children who may be sensitive to environmental noise positioned away from this equipment?		
Is there humming from fluorescent lighting?		
Are there loud hand driers?		
Are there clear strategies used to support children tolerate loud, sudden sounds? i.e. fire alarms.		
Are ear defenders available for identified children to use to help them manage identified noisier times of the day?		
Are there toys available that are suitable for children who seek light and/or sounds?		
<b>SMELL</b>		
<b>Things to consider</b>	<b>Current situation</b>	<b>Possible action if needed</b>
Are smells in the classroom kept to a minimum? Are staff aware of their possible impact on some children?		
Do setting staff consider the care and cleaning products/resources they use and		

# Education and inclusion

their smell? i.e. cleaning sprays, air fresheners, handwash, etc. Do setting staff avoid using strong smelling products?		
Does the bathroom and changing area have a distinctive smell? Do staff consider/understand the possible impact of the smell of the bathroom and changing area on some children?		
Are there additional smells at specific times of the day? i.e. lunchtime, smells from outside. Do the children eat in the same room as they play making escaping smells more difficult? Do staff try to reduce smells at these times? E.g. opening/closing windows etc.		
Do staff offer familiar smells to identified children to help comfort them? i.e. smells of home e.g. moms' perfume or familiar washing powder.		
Are staff aware the smell of some perfumes and deodorants may be upsetting or overwhelming to a child? Are the use of perfumes and deodorants kept to a minimum?		

# Education and inclusion

Are staff aware that a child may react to the smell of other people, such as the smell of coffee on someone's breath?		
<b>TOUCH/FEEL</b>		
<b>Things to consider</b>	<b>Current situation</b>	<b>Possible action if needed</b>
Do staff understand how some clothing can cause distress? i.e. seams, wearing shoes. Are staff instructed/aware not to force children to wear items they find uncomfortable? Are some items of alternative clothing allowed to be worn? i.e. slippers indoors instead of shoes.		
If there is a nursery uniform, is it comfortable to wear? i.e. stretch fabric/elasticated waistbands etc.		
Are children being bumped and jostled by other children at busy times? i.e. cloak room, carpet time. Are identified children given space to walk and sit without being bumped and jostled by other children at busy times?		
Do staff consider the temperature of the room/classroom? i.e. not too hot or too cold. How is the room temperature monitored?		
Are floors etc. kept as free as possible from sand etc?		

# Education and inclusion

Are there resources/toys safe for children to feel, touch and mouth?		
Do all staff ensure children wear suitable clothing for the weather when playing outside? i.e. to ensure they are cool in summer and warm in winter.		
<b>BALANCE AND MOVEMENT</b>		
<b>Things to consider</b>	<b>Current situation</b>	<b>Possible action if needed</b>
Is there space available, indoors and outside, for children to make large movements? i.e. marching, jumping etc. Are staff aware some children need to take part in regular physical movement? Are arrangements made to enable this to happen?		
Are there movement aids available for children to use, such as wobble cushions to allow more movement whilst sitting?		
Do setting staff use short movement/dance breaks if expecting children to sit for more than a few minutes? E.g. 'wake and shake'.		
Do all children have regular access to outside play and gross motor play across the session/day?		

# Education and inclusion

Are some children allowed to sit on chairs or have something to lean against if it helps them sit better?		
Does setting provide indoor equipment such as a trampette or rocker for children to use?		
Is there equipment available to engage children in heavy work activity? i.e. Indoors ... box/basket to push/pull, broom for sweeping, outside ... wheelbarrow, broom for sweeping.		

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES		
Statement	Current situation	Possible action if needed
All staff have had some basic training to understand sensory processing differences and how it can impact a wide variety of children		
We have provision and strategies in place to meet the sensory needs of our current cohort of children.		