

Queensmill School

Policy guidelines for addressing students' sensory issues

Mission Statement: A caring environment where we respect and value children for what they are, help them to understand the world around them and teach them to manage their autistic behaviours.

Aims:

At Queensmill School we understand that our children and young people have a range of sensory issues which may impact on their learning and participation. Our aim is to support students to achieve and maintain a calm-alert state, enabling them to engage with and achieve their potential in a range of school activities.

Occupational Therapy:

Queensmill School employs three full-time Occupational Therapists who have specialist training in Sensory Integration theory and intervention. The Occupational Therapists work closely with class staff, parents and other professionals to assess student's sensory needs and implement a sensory diet. A sensory diet is a planned programme of activities designed to meet a child's specific sensory needs. This can include access to specific activities, adapted equipment and environments. Sensory approaches at Queensmill School are embedded within daily classroom practice. Sensory diet activities can therefore form part of students' pen portraits, behaviour support plans and IEP targets.

The following procedures are in place to ensure that the individual sensory needs of children and young people at Queensmill School are met in an appropriate and safe way:

- Occupational Therapists participate in a range of Continuing Professional Development activities to remain up to date with current Sensory Integration research and practice;
- All new Queensmill staff receive induction training in 'Understanding Sensory Issues in Autism' from the Occupational Therapy team;
- Ongoing training in sensory issues and approaches is provided to Queensmill staff by the Occupational Therapy team through INSET sessions, equipment demonstrations and refresher training;
- Occupational Therapists work class-based in order to observe, trial and monitor students' sensory needs and sensory diets;
- Occupational Therapists meet and liaise regularly with class staff;
- Risk assessments and guidelines are in place regarding the use of sensory approaches, equipment (including weighted equipment) and Occupational Therapy rooms.

Use of Sensory Equipment

Students at Queensmill School have access to a range of equipment to meet their sensory needs within the classrooms and around the school. In order to ensure that the equipment is used appropriately all staff are advised to:

- Read relevant risk assessments and guidelines before using equipment;
- Refer to Occupational Therapist for advice and/or demonstration of equipment as needed;
- Check equipment for wear/tear and cleanliness prior to use;
- Report any concerns regarding equipment to Occupational Therapy team.

Physical Touch

Many of our children seek out positive touch. This can be in the form of hand holding, a reassuring hug, a deep pressure squeeze or massage. All positive touch should be child led and meet the needs of the child at that time (i.e. to calm them, meet their sensory needs or help them to feel secure). Staff should use their professional judgement as to the needs of the child and what touch is appropriate. Deep pressure techniques such as massage can prove highly effective in calming our children. We need to be aware of the appropriateness of this on a number of levels.

- Only adults who know the student well should engage in physical touch techniques;
- When using massage and deep pressure only the student's legs, arms, feet, hands and shoulders, back and head should be touched;
- Staff at Queensmill should use their knowledge of the child or young person to assess whether massage or deep pressure is appropriate,
- Staff members can refer to Queensmill's Occupational Therapist for advice on massage and deep pressure;
- Written consent should be obtained from parents prior to use of creams or oils during massage;
- Stomach massage should be undertaken only by staff members who have accredited training in this type of massage and with written consent from parents.

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Policy reviewed – January 2016

Reviewed by *F Adu*.....

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