

There is a school outside the United States that provided this article on their website about sensory difference. In the Everett School District, we provide the same supports as they have listed as needed for our students with sensory differences within the educational setting.

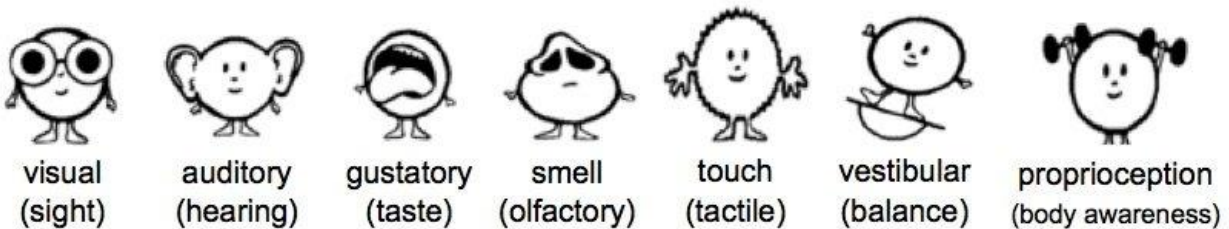
## Sensory Differences

<https://linwood.bournemouth.sch.uk/linwood/learning/sensory-differences/>

### Sensory Processing Difficulties

Many of our students have difficulty processing everyday sensory information. People with sensory processing difficulties find it difficult to filter out sensory stimulation and can feel overwhelmed, anxious or distressed. Sensory processing differences can make it difficult for students to focus on their learning and can affect their behaviour.

We have seven senses:



People with sensory processing difficulties can be over- or under-sensitive in any or all of these areas. We describe this as being 'hypersensitive' or 'hyposensitive'.

### Hypersensitivity

People who have a 'hypersensitivity' to certain sensory stimulation will usually present with 'blocking' behaviours where they try to block out the stimulation they find overwhelming.

Here are some examples:

- Hypersensitive hearing – The person may put their fingers in their ears.
- Hypersensitive visual system – The person finds it easier to look at small details rather than the whole object. They may prefer to look at things through the corner of their eyes.
- Hypersensitive proprioception – The person may have difficulty with fine motor coordination. tasks, such as buttoning up their shirt. They might not like other people to be in close proximity.
- Hypersensitive taste system – The person may refuse to try new food, have a restricted diet and only like certain textures.
- Hypersensitive vestibular system – The person may become car-sick easily and avoid activities such as swinging or going on a roundabout. They become fearful when their feet leave the ground.
- Hypersensitive olfactory system – A person may become distressed by certain smells and refuse to go into the lunch hall if they don't like the smell of the dinner.

- Hypersensitive tactile system – The person might be overly sensitive to labels or seams in their clothes. They might refuse to wear new clothes. They may find it very uncomfortable to brush their teeth or hair.

## Hyposensitivity

People who have a 'hyposensitivity' to sensory information may present with 'seeking' behaviours, where they try to seek stimulation that is lacking for them. It may feel as though their senses are dulled and they need to seek sensory input to stimulate their senses.

Here are some examples:

- Hyposensitive hearing – The person may enjoy banging things, loud music or making sounds.
- Hyposensitive visual system – The person may have poor depth perception and find it difficult to walk down stairs or catch a ball.
- Hyposensitive proprioception – The person may like deep pressure, like lying under blankets and cushions. They may prefer to drag their hand along the playground fence, walking around the perimeter, rather than walking across an open space. They may stand too close to other people, seeming unaware of personal space.
- Hyposensitive taste system – The person may enjoy strong flavours. They may try to eat inedible things such as grass or playdough.
- Hyposensitive vestibular system – The person may need to rock, spin or flap their hands to stimulate their sense of movement and balance.
- Hyposensitive olfactory system – The person may try to sniff objects and people. They may not seem to notice strong smells.
- Hyposensitive tactile system – The person may have a high pain threshold. They may not notice changes in temperature. Sometimes they may self-harm to gain tactile input.

## What do we have in place to support students' sensory differences?

- We adapt the environment to suit the individual where practical, e.g. seating plans, individual work bays, wobble cushions.
- We teach students appropriate coping strategies.
- We provide appropriate alternative ways to seek stimulation.
- We support students to build up their tolerance levels to situations that cause sensory distress.
- We provide a 'low arousal' approach to reduce unnecessary sensory distractions.
- We identify individual students' strengths and weaknesses through sensory assessments.
- We develop individual sensory profiles detailing how we can appeal to students' strengths and address their weaknesses through various activities.



## Resources we use

We have a wide range of resources which we use to support individual sensory needs.

- weighted vests
- lap cushions
- neck cushions
- weighted blankets
- chewy tubes
- fidget toys
- move 'n' sit cushions
- thera-band

## Activities we do

- We provide regular exercise opportunities and active lessons for vestibular stimulation.
- Our students enjoy sensory-based lessons.
- We incorporate sensory aspects to 'intensive interaction'.

