

Sensory activities:

Dear parents/carers,

Here is a list of activities you can try with your children during the extended school closure. Helping your child with their sensory needs will support them stay calm while at home. Each child will respond differently to each sensory stimulus. We therefore ask you give the activities a try and use the activities that work best for your child.

Try to incorporate sensory activities throughout the day. Here are some ideas for activities that may help your child stay calmer throughout the day. You know your child best. Observe when he or she is calm and focused and what sensory qualities are present. Is he or she reading a book (vision), taking a bath (tactile), listening to music (auditory), jumping on a trampoline (heavy work and movement), swinging (movement), manipulating a fidget item (vision and tactile)? Our sensory experiences help regulate our level of arousal. Providing a balance of activities that are calming or activating may help your child, learn to recognise and control how they meet their needs. When coming up with sensory strategies, it is important to take into consideration your child's specific interests as well as their individual sensory needs.

- Make strategies fit into everyday life routines such as exercise/weight lifting programme for heavy work, taking a shower every morning to help alert and engage, or eat healthy crunchy/chewy snacks for calming/regulating input.
- Engage your child in specific chores that will meet their sensory needs e.g. vacuuming is heavy work, washing dishes provides tactile feedback, and cooking can provide input to multiple systems.
- Work with your child to design a designated sensory space where they can get needed input. This will vary depending on your child's needs and interests but could be a space with a beanbag chair, some stress balls, headphones with music, and an eye mask.
- Explore home exercise programmes that your child can watch and join in. All children should engage in physical activity for at least 60 minutes a day.
- Work with your child to design a physical activity area indoors and outdoors. This will vary depending on your child's needs and interests but the indoor space could include a small trampette, hula-hoop, ankle and/or wrist weights, a Yoga mat, pictures of Yoga Poses and pictures of gym exercises (e.g. plank, push-ups). The outdoor space could include basketballs, footballs or tennis balls.
- Tight, lycra clothing helps some children to regulate. They may like tight vests under their t-shirts.
- A rocking gaming chair can provide calming movement – or simply sit on the floor, hold your child's hands and rock backwards and forwards – singing row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream.....
- Have a box or bag of fidget items available. The items needed for this will depend on your child's sensory needs and interests but could include putty, squeeze balls, fidget spinners etc.
- Work with your child to choose music to help them to regulate. This may be quiet background music to block out other sounds, listening to calming music through headphones or playing a musical instrument.
- Art/craft and construction activities provide lots of calming tactile input. Ideas can include teenage colouring books, sketching, slime, sticker mosaic books and Lego.