

SEND Bulletin NO. 15



SID (sensory integration disorder)

Sensory integration difficulties can be experienced by a number of pupils with learning disabilities, particularly those on the autistic spectrum, those with ADHD, dyspraxia and those with brain injury or stress-related problems.

However, sensory integration disorder can be found in young people of all ages, levels of ability and socioeconomic groups. It is a neurological disorder where the brain is unable to integrate certain information received from the senses. If a pupil's sensory integration development is disordered then their response to certain sensory information can sometimes be intensified or not present at all. This, in turn, affects how well speech, motor and social and emotional skills develop and can result in a number of problems with behaviour, motor development and learning.

Key characteristics

A pupil with sensory integration disorder may:

- appear to lack self-control and be impulsive
- have delays in speech and language development
- be over-sensitive or insensitive to sights, sounds, movement and touch
- appear to be clumsy, bumping into people and objects

- have poor social interactions and difficulty making friends
- have poor motor planning and control
- be easily distracted and therefore find it hard to focus on one activity
- have low self-esteem
- have an intense dislike of certain smells or fail to notice extreme smells
- have difficulty defining objects, people, colours and contrasts
- prefer particular foods because their taste buds are extremely sensitive.

Support strategies

You may need to:

- be aware of any sensory integration therapy that the pupil may be receiving
- try to create a comfortable learning environment to avoid sensory overload
- give advance warning, if possible, of changes in sensory stimuli
- break down activities into small steps giving visual cues and prompts
- provide a reasonably quiet working environment when possible
- incorporate suggested motor coordination exercises into a PE programme
- ensure that time is allocated for support activities to develop fine motor skills
- check responses to light stimuli, such as fluorescent lighting
- create a work area without too many visual distractions
- allow the pupil to try out different materials and textures during learning situations in order to find those he/she is most comfortable with
- be aware of invading the pupil's personal space.

Support agencies

- Sensory Integration Network: www.sensoryintegration.org.uk

If you have any interesting information or resources which you would like to share with your colleagues via this fortnightly bulletin, please e-mail them to me:

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Many thanks

Anne