

Dosthill Primary Academy

SEND Newsletter

Issue 4– December 2024



Dear Parents and carers,

Welcome to our monthly SEND newsletter.

This half- term has flown by and Christmas is nearly upon us. Whilst this is a busy and exciting time for many, it also involves lots of change and may cause some children to struggle with sensory overload.

This month I have included some tips to support children over the Christmas period.

Please do email me or speak to the office if you would like to arrange to meet or for me to contact you. senco@dosthill.org.

Mrs Katie Smith
SENCO

Helping your child to cope at Christmas

Christmas is an exciting time of year, but for some children with additional needs it can be difficult because of the changes to routine. Here are some suggestions shared by the New Life Children's Charity to help things run smoothly, so everyone can enjoy a calmer Christmas.



As children grow their needs change and what worked last year might not now, so accepting what is and isn't going to be possible and giving everyone realistic expectations for the Christmas holidays is key - both for yourself, your child and other family members.

- 1) Add Christmas decorations slowly so the change isn't too big, and if possible have them help or be involved in decisions.
- 2) Try to keep to your normal routine as much as possible, especially at bedtime and morning, and any other aspects of your child's day which keep them anchored.
- 3) If you are taking part in activities, ensure you build in quiet time and a way to escape if they are overwhelmed or need a quiet space where they feel safe.
- 4) Think through any activities over the festive period step by step and be conscious of any triggers such as lights, sounds, smells, crowds. Are there new things you need to consider that have developed since last year?

5) Be clear with your child on what they can expect from each part of the day, going over any aspects they may find especially tricky, such as visiting relatives or crowds. You can use a visual timetable, social stories, draw pictures or role play to help them understand.

6) When it comes to visiting family, or having visitors in your home, explain your needs for you and your child participating and what they can expect from your child. The last thing anyone needs is stress about a family member who thinks they know how to parent your child.

8) Food is a big part of Christmas for many people - but if they need to eat something different to everyone else - then let them. Choose your battles.

9) Which leads on to don't sweat the small stuff. We all have ideas of how we want Christmas to be, but if it doesn't happen, it's not the end of the world.

10) Remember it's your Christmas so celebrate it the way that's best for you and your family - if that means no tinsel, turkey and tree then so be it.

For further information visit: <https://www.theschoolrun.com/surviving-festive-season-parents-tips-sen-kids> or <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/blog/autism-and-christmas-top-tips-for-surviving-the-festive-season>

The Staffordshire Autism team also offer lots of support and advice on their Facebook page which can be accessed here:

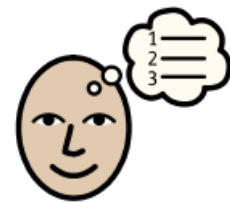
[Staffordshire Autism Inclusion Team | Facebook](#)



Understanding



Sensory



Processing

What is sensory processing?

The term 'sensory processing' describes how we understand information from the world around us - through our senses - sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell.

There are also two other senses, 'proprioception' (body awareness) and 'vestibular' (balance and movement).

Some children may show a heightened response to some sensations and this can very occasionally be a sign of a sensory processing difficulty. However, it is important to remember that having a sensitivity in one area, during certain times of the day, does not usually mean that your child has a sensory processing difficulty or needs to see an occupational therapist.

A great many children under the age of five, with no sensory processing issues, will find certain parts of their daily routine difficult. These often include bath time, hair brushing, visiting the supermarket and loud or unpredictable noises.

Daily routines

Many children resist parts of the daily routine as a way of trying to exert greater control over their environment - and their parents! Try to work out if your child really dislikes certain sensations or activities, or whether they are experimenting with control. Sometimes you may avoid certain situations, places or activities to avoid the reaction they bring out in your child. However, bear in mind that this means your child will not have the opportunity to experience the things they find challenging and it will be harder for them to learn to become tolerant of them. Your child may become anxious about certain situations or environments.

If this happens, you need to prepare them for the activity to help them cope better with it. Reassurance is very important and needs to be given in a way that your child can understand. Looking at pictures or photo stories about the activity, holding a familiar comforting toy, or using a picture timetable for the event that is happening can all be helpful.

My child dislikes noise...

- Offer noise reducing headphones, earphones or earplugs: For school, soft play, cafes, shopping centres, cinema, restaurants, birthday parties, etc.
- Make sure that you are talking to your child at their level, whilst they are looking at you. Use simple, age-appropriate language.
 - Use or play songs to catch your child's attention, so they want to listen.
 - Avoid calling to your child across a busy room if possible and approach them from the front, rather than behind.
- Play a relaxation CD or nature sounds, "white" noise or soothing music. Prepare your child for noisy situations ahead of time.
- Where possible, knowing when something is going to happen (e.g., fire drill) helps the child to mentally get ready for it.



My child won't eat that...

- Bear in mind that many children go through phases where they will and won't eat certain types of foods.
- It will help if your child is sat properly at a table, where possible, with their feet supported. If your child is very 'wiggly' try having an active play session before mealtimes.
- Try to keep mealtimes calm and fun, even if your child is refusing the food that you have made. Do not force your child to eat something, but try encouraging gently with games, reward charts, etc.
- You could try involving your child in the cooking as they are more likely to try something they have helped to make.
- Allow your child to experiment with different finger foods and textures. If your child does not like to touch food, try using a dip with a finger of toast, bread stick or raw vegetable stick.



My child seeks or avoids movement ...

Most children develop a strong vestibular (movement) sense simply through engaging in everyday play activities that allow for exploration and movement. There are many activities that can help promote the development of a healthy vestibular system. Here are some of our favourites:

- Slides are beneficial for providing fast movement.
- Hanging upside-down from playground equipment (with supervision only!) Or if your Dad holds you by your feet and carefully plonks you on the bed or sofa (remember safety first!)
 - Rocking! Fast, slow, or to the rhythm of your favourite song!
- Cardboard Box Race Cars- let Mum or Dad push you down the passage or around the house in your cardboard racing car whilst you navigate.



THE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TEAM IN SCHOOLS ARE **OPEN** OVER THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

Monday 23rd December - Monday 4th January
(excluding weekends and bank holidays)

If your child is experiencing low level mental health difficulties, we may be able to help. Call us* between 9am - 5pm (Monday to Friday), leave your name and number and one of our practitioners will give you a call back to see what support we can offer.

We can help with:

- Low mood
- Anxiety
- Sleep difficulties
- Worry
- Panic



Burton and Uttoxeter
01283 504487

Cannock and Lichfield
01283 352113

Stafford
01283 352097

Tamworth
01785 301027



Dates for next term

W/C 3.2.24- Parent's Evening.

W/C 10.3.24- ILP Reviews.

Parent/Carer Cause for Concern

Please email to senco@dosthill.org to return to Mrs Smith, SENCO.

This is the link to an MS Forms version: <https://forms.office.com/e/F4SnWgsGxC?origin=lprLink>

Child's Name: **D.O.B:** **Class:**
.....

Child's strengths and achievements:

Concerns at home:

Concerns at school:

Parent/Carer information:

A description of all available information about your child.

Areas of concern:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visual | <input type="checkbox"/> Auditory | <input type="checkbox"/> Communication/Speech |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional | <input type="checkbox"/> Behaviour | <input type="checkbox"/> Attendance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical | <input type="checkbox"/> Punctuality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social | <input type="checkbox"/> Eating | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please state): |

Signed: **Date:**
.....