National Sensory Impairment Partnership

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE: OBSERVATIONAL SCHEDULE

Date: September 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

This checklist is designed to be used in both mainstream and special school settings and as a first port of call by non-specialist sensory impairment staff. The aim is to flag areas which require further investigation, attention or support whilst carrying out classroom observations or learning walks.

As always, the best advice will be secured through contacting the local sensory impairment support service from the local authority for specialist suggestions for interventions.

This checklist focuses on good basic fundamentals in sensory impairment practice and provision that we would hope to see in place.

Within the context of educational provision, it is anticipated that key aspects of general Quality First Teaching such as chunking, scaffolded learning, flexible grouping, etc. are in place, and that learner progress and voice are recorded appropriately.

A key check, common across all areas, is that there is evidence of involvement of specialists such as qualified teachers of the deaf, qualified teachers of children and young people with vision impairment and qualified teachers of children and young people with multi-sensory impairment, habilitation officers, audiologists, therapists, intervenors, communication support workers etc.

2. TERMINOLOGY

The document uses the following terminology:

Sensory Impairment (SI) – The SEND Code of Practice (2014, updated January 2015) sets out physical and/or sensory needs as one of the four broad areas of special educational needs.

SI refers to Hearing Impairment (HI), Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI) and Vision Impairment (VI).

- Hearing Impairment or deafness happens when one or more parts of the ear is not working effectively and there is a hearing loss[1].
- Multi-Sensory Impairment or deafblindness is a combination of sight and hearing loss that affects a person's ability to communicate, access information and get around. A deafblind person won't usually be totally deaf and totally blind, but both senses will be reduced enough to cause significant difficulties in everyday life[2].
- Vision Impairment is a term uses to describe any kind of vision loss, whether it applies to someone who cannot see at all, or to someone who has partial vision loss[3].

Learner refers to any child or young person between the ages of 0 and 25yrs, specifically for this schedule, in an educational setting.

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[1] See https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/childhood-deafness/what-is-deafness/
[2] See https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/deafblindness/
[3] See https://www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-family-friends-and-carers/understanding-your-childs-eye-condition

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Learner's name:			
Completed by:		Date:	

VISION	RAG	Comments	Action By whom? By when?
Teaching Is there evidence of a suitably balanced timetable in place, e.g., short spells of visual activity interspersed with less demanding visual activities?			
Classroom management Is the learner addressed by name to get their attention? What considerations are in place to minimise visual distractions and optimise the visual environment? Is the learner seated in the optimum position in relation to the teacher, 1:1 support and the board (including interactive whiteboard) etc? Does this take into account levels of vision and visual field? How do you know? Is there individual sensory guidance in place? If so, check it.			
Access to information Are strategies which will be used in tests, exams or assessments embedded as the normal way of working? Does the learner have their own copy of resources? Are appropriate modifications to print resources and information in place? How do you know? Is there specialist advice in place? If so, check it.			

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Completed by:		Date:	

HEARING	RAG	Comments	Action By whom? By when?
Teaching Do all staff use a range of strategies to gain the learner's attention e.g. using their name first? Is speech being used at an appropriate, natural rate and is understanding checked? Is language differentiated and naturally rich and varied? Is sufficient time provided for the learner to take in information and process it and to allow for signed or alternative communication to be used and for staff to relay/provide voice over as needed? Are strategies used to support auditory and linguistic memory e.g. use of repetition of key vocabulary and instructions or chunking information to make it more manageable and to avoid concentration fatigue?			
Classroom management Does the learner's seating position allow good access to learning, with suitable placement of staff and other learners in relation to light so that lip patterns and facial expressions are readily visible? Does the position in the classroom take into account hearing levels and assistive technology e.g. hearing aids? etc. How do you know? Are there guidelines in place? If so, check them. Are auditory and visual distractions minimised and managed effectively? How do you know? Are there guidelines in place? If so, check them. Does the teacher use a range of strategies to ensure that the learner has accessed and understood all contributions from peers/adults in the lesson e.g. by repeating all contributions in class for clarity? Is general good practice being used such as: facing the learner when speaking to them, keeping hands away from mouth, suitable placement of staff and other learners in relation to light so that lip patterns and facial expressions are readily visible?			
Access to information Are strategies which will be used in tests, exams or assessments embedded as the normal way of working? Are visual strategies used to support listening and access such as subtitles on videos, key vocabulary provided in written format and displayed in the classroom, visual cues e.g. photographs, pictures and real objects? Is assistive listening technology e.g., cochlear implant worn and working well? If assistive listening technology is used, is this managed effectively e.g. muted/unmuted and being used in small groups as well as by the teacher? Are there processes in place to support the learner to manage their equipment independently?			

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Completed by:		Date:	

MULTI-SENSORY IMPAIRMENT	RAG	Comments	Action By whom? By when**?**
Teaching Are sensory breaks present? Does the timetable follow a 'burst pause' pattern? Is there awareness of the impact of using more than one sensory channel at a time? Are beginnings and endings of activities and lessons clearly communicated?			
Classroom management Is there an attempt to minimise sensory distractions? Are independent learning, self-advocacy, confidence and social interaction encouraged and supported?			
Access to information Is the learner in the optimum position to gain incidental information from peers, e.g. seated with good visual and auditory access according to their individual needs? Is communication paced appropriately to allow for processing of visual, auditory and tactile information?			