

# Movement and sensory breaks: how we support your child in school.



## School's Ethos

At Manor Park, we strive to ensure children are active and engaged participants in their learning. We understand that children need to move to stay motivated and opportunities are built in throughout the day for all.

## Sensory

Everyone has a sensory profile, with different preferences. Some of us love roller coasters, others of us hate them with a passion. Some of us get car sick while others don't. Some of us need to be wrapped up tightly with the duvet to sleep, others only want the lightest of sheets.

Most of our brains can take the sensory information from our bodies and use this so that we feel in a good place to interact with the world and behave in expected ways.

However, for some of us this processing of the information in our brains works in a different way, which can lead to us being extremely active, bouncing off the walls, or getting very frightened by situations or finding it very difficult to get going.

Therefore, some children need more sensory input for their sensory systems to recognise it, or more sensory input to 'wake up' their sensory systems or targeted sensory input to support over reaction in their sensory systems.

We focus sensory activities around three senses, the vestibular (movement and balance), proprioceptive (heavy muscle work and body awareness) and tactile (touch) senses, as these are the foundations for how our brain receives and processes sensory information so that we can do the things we need to do in our everyday life.

## Whole class movement strategies

- Targetted learning means children are not seated for extended periods of time.
- Whole class and group learning approaches are active and encourage children to move, converse and interact with each other.
- Active playtimes are encouraged, with access to climbing frames and other physical activities for all.
- On the very rare occasion a child has to miss play, an opportunity to have fresh air and move outside is given.
- Brain breaks - these might be an active learning game, or short bursts of exercise.
- Wake & Shake sessions are used, such as BBC Supermovers or Go Noodle.
- Sensory learning approach, such as using play dough to practise spellings.
- Weekly Outdoor Learning opportunities.
- PE lessons developing core strength.

## Individual approaches

Some children do need more opportunities to meet sensory needs or extra movement to stay engaged or maintain regulation. We use a number of strategies to support these, a few of which are listed below:

- Collection of fruit or milk, taking a message to another class, carrying something heavy to another class.
- A quiet place in the classroom.
- Personalised class tasks, for example stacking chairs or sharpening pencils.
- Pastoral sessions to help develop discreet classroom strategies.

These are discrete strategies, as taking children out of lessons regularly can increase anxiety as they miss vital learning opportunities.

# Movement and sensory breaks: how you can support your child at home.

## Heavy muscle activities

The following activities will be calming to most children:

- o help with household chores:
  - o hoovering
  - o Watering the flowers
  - o using a heavy watering can filled with water
  - o digging in the garden
  - o carrying the shopping
  - o loading and unloading the washing machine
- o use a straw for drinks - the wiggly ones that encourage effort in sucking are the best.
- o playdough / slime
- o tug of war
- o chair or wall push ups
- o hanging from a bar
- o firm massage, either with hands or massage tools

## These movement activities will tend to be more alerting for children:

- o pogo stick
- o trampoline
- o skipping rope
- o blowing bubbles in the garden
- o play hopscotch
- o hanging upside down
- o cartwheels
- o spinning around in circles
- o jumping jacks
- o bunny hops

## Physical activity

General physical activity is always good:

- o cycling
- o scooter
- o swimming
- o running
- o Playpark: swings, zip wire, roundabout, see saw, slide, hanging on monkey bars

## Other suggestions

- o Help to carry the shopping.
- o Wearing a heavy rucksack
- o If your child does not like the sensory aspects of washing or bathing try:
  - o Wrapping tightly in a towel before and after the bath.
  - o Briskly rub your child.
  - o Rub face with a flannel before washing
- o For older children also try gym exercises, such as squats, lunges, the plank, sit ups, gym ball and weights.
- o Some of these activities will be more suitable for certain children. You know your child best. Go with what they enjoy, but return to the calming activities if your child is getting over excited!

*Adapted from Dorset Council's Sensory Strategies in the Home.*



LOVE FOR GOD, LOVE FOR EACH OTHER, LOVE FOR LEARNING