How to run a successful sensory circuit

- Have all the equipment ready for all three parts before you begin and it is in working order.

- Decide how many stations will be involved in each section eg: 3 activities with in each section. Make a list for yourself of the correct order of activities.

- Ensure the environment is safe and there is enough space.

- Ensure the circuit remains well organised, a set time of approx. 45 secs for each activity is the ideal amount. Circuit lasting 20-30 mins.

- Continue to use all communication aids whilst the circuit is running.

Have one member of staff designated to keep time and give the direct when it is time to change activity.

Within the classroom setting it is often possible to transfer techniques used within the sensory circuits to continue to support a child. Frequent movement breaks can be built into the school day. Please call The Swifts Team and talk to the Occupational Therapists for more suggestions and advice.


Top Tips:

- Model the activities. Some children may find them challenging. Allowing them to stand and watch the first time will build confidence.

- Include activities that aim to restore sensory balance, not overload them! Some children may need more time in the calming section.
What is sensory processing

- Sensory processing refers to the way the nervous system receives messages from the senses and then organises and interprets the information to generate responses.
- As adults we still use sensory motor experiences to help us be more appropriately alert to the task in hand, often referred to as habits eg: fiddle with hair, tap a pen, go to the gym. We all have our own sensory responses. As we develop they become more subtle and appropriate.
- Individuals with a neuro developmental disorder may have difficulty organising and making sense of information around them. This may lead to difficulties in the classroom and may drive challenging behaviour.

What are sensory circuits?

- The aim of Sensory Circuits is to facilitate sensory processing to allow children to be in the optimum state of alertness supporting participation.
- The Sensory Circuit provides a sequence of activities done repeatedly to provide the child with the right type of sensory input in order to calm and organise them ready for learning.

Why use sensory circuits in class?

Once established the sensory circuit can become part of the school day. Participation in a short sensory circuit is a great way to energise and settle children into the school day.
- Improves self-esteem
- Development of physical skills
- Increases focus and attention and an improved ability to settle down to work
- Provides opportunity to engage in specific learning eg: counting.
- Improved communication skills for children working at all levels.

How can we use sensory circuits?

Sensory Circuits involve 3 types of activities. When used in order they can be effective in supporting children to improve their levels of attention and focus. They can help to tackle sensory imbalances and support those with lots of energy to enable them to redirect it positively.

1. **Alerting section** - the aim of this section is to provide vestibular stimulation (movement) within a controlled setting, preparing the brain for availability for learning and for the demands of the school environment.
2. **Organising section** - this section aims to provide activities that require multi-sensory processing and balance. The child needs to organise their body, plan their approach and do more than one thing at a time in a set sequential order.
3. **Calming** - the aim of this section is the most important. The calming activities provide input to ensure that as children leave the circuit and return to the classroom they are calm and centred are calm and alert and ready for learning.