

## 10 practical adjustments that support autistic students

### Infosheet 5 for educators

# Adjusting the sensory environment

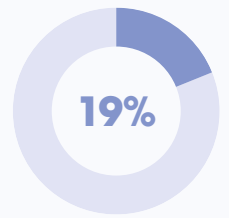
**Autistic students can be acutely sensitive and aware of light, sound, odours, tastes, touch and textures – far more than their neurotypical peers.**

These autistic students will need to avoid sensory stimulus that they find difficult.

They may need to leave the classroom if the noise becomes too loud, or wear sunglasses or hats to reduce light. Overexposure may lead to becoming overwhelmed and result in a meltdown.

**Many autistic people have problems with their senses that can profoundly affect their lives and impact their behavior and ability to concentrate and learn. Adjustments to the sensory environment may include:**

- Being aware of how the student with sensory issues has to work and whether the student is hypersensitive (over-responsive) or hyposensitive (under-responsive).
- If hypersensitive - adjust the physical surroundings so that it is low stimulus e.g. soft non-fluorescent or natural lighting, allow sunglasses to be used inside/outside, use noise reduction headphones, avoid the use of strong perfumes and deodorants, be aware of noise create by fans/heaters, allow the child to wear a hat/hoodie inside the classroom to act as a buffer, sit student at the front of the room to reduce visual stimulus overload.
- If hyposensitive – provide the opportunities for stimulation for the child who craves it e.g. allow the student to listen to music through headphones, participate in messy tactile activities, use of things with texture, fidget toys.
- Stress release resources provided such as fidget toys, weighted blankets, cushions to sit on hard surfaces, textured materials and objects.
- Flexible school uniform policies that allow for adjustments to be made according to the student's sensory needs.
- Opportunities for students to move around the room.
- Create a space the student can retreat to if they feel overloaded.
- Consider where the student's seat should be positioned – they may not like to be surrounded on all sides and need to sit on the end of a row or up the front to reduce the amount of visual stimulus that may be cluttering the room.



**19%**  
of autistic students  
surveyed have had this  
adjustment implemented  
at their school\*

Contact Amaze for professional development training and forums for teachers and school staff [here](#) or contact us on 03 9657 1600

\*Source: 'Community Attitudes & Behaviours towards Autism; and Experience of Autistic People and their Families': Research report prepared by Centre for Health and Social Research, Australian Catholic University, Social Research Centre for AMAZE 12 December 2017