

Sensory integration – Behaviour is a symptom

Pupil observation checklist

What is children's behaviour actually telling you? For example, if a pupil can't sit still, and struggles with attention and focus, the first label many people will reach for is ADHD. Meanwhile, what many teachers will do, and indeed what many educational psychologists recommend, is try a behaviour modification programme – rewarding the pupil for sitting still in his chair. However, it could be that their behaviour is telling you they have an immature vestibular system.

The checklist below will provide an occupational therapist with the specific information they need to support a more thorough, wide-ranging assessment. You can download additional copies from <http://bit.ly/sc231-06>

Pupil:	Date:	Almost always	Frequently	Sometimes
Tick the boxes that best describes the frequency with which this pupil does the following.				
Auditory				
Misses oral direction in class more than other pupils				
Appears to not hear what you say				
Seems oblivious within an active environment (unaware of activity)				
Hums, whistles, sings or makes other noises throughout the day				
Tends to repeat directions to himself				
Is distracted or has trouble functioning if there is a lot of noise in the area				
Tells others to be quiet				
Becomes distressed during assemblies, lunch or other large gatherings				
Is overly bothered by loud or unexpected noises (fire alarm, doors slamming, bells)				
Holds hands over ears to protect them from sound				
Visual				
Misses written or demonstrated directions more than other pupils				
Has trouble keeping materials and supplies organised for use during the day				
Leaves items blank on a busy worksheet even when they know the answers				
Doesn't watch during instruction, but follows through with activities				
Adds more details to drawings and colourings than other pupils				
Has difficulty copying designs, numbers or letters				
Is startled by unexpected movements near their desk or around the room				
Avoids eye contact				
Has difficulty copying from the board				
Reverses letters after first year				
Forgets formation of letters				
Has poor line spacing				
Movement/vestibular				
Is clumsy and awkward (bumps into desks and children when moving around the room)				
Seems weaker than others their age, tires easily				
Has difficulty with hop, jump, skip, or run compared to others their age				
Slouches, slumps or sprawls in their chair				
Rests their head in their hands or on the desk during seated work				
Seeks out all kinds of movements: up out of chair frequently, rocks in chair, can't sit still, fidgets				
Retreats to a quiet area in the classroom				
Stands or sits at the side of the playground during playtime (perimeter play)				
Is slow to participate in physically active tasks or activities				
Chews/licks/sucks on non-food objects (sleeves, collar, pencils/pens)				
Touch				
Does not hold the paper down when writing				
Comes too close into other people's personal space				
Doesn't seem to notice when their face and hands remain soiled				
Does not like it when face or hands are messy/soiled				
Refuses to participate in activities that are messy (art projects, using glue or paint)				
Touches people and objects to the point of irritating them				
Apt to touch everything they see, 'learns through their fingers'				
Plays or fiddles with objects or school supplies				
Displays an unusual need to touch certain toys, surfaces or textures				
Is fidgety or disruptive when standing in line or close to other people				
Is easily upset by minor injuries				
Flinches when you get in close proximity or touch their body				
Tends to a wear coat when it is not needed; will not allow shirtsleeves pulled up				

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Behaviour			
Is inefficient in doing things (wastes time, moves slowly, makes tasks more complicated)			
Appears inactive (seems to lack energy)			
Shows little emotion regardless of the situation			
Is bothered by rules being broken			
Is bossy with classmates or peers			
Can be described as overreactive when compared to classmates or peers			
Doesn't have a sense of humour			
Can be described as inflexible when compared to classmates or peers			
Has difficulty tolerating changes in routines			
Withdraws when there are changes in the environment or routine			
Perseverates to the point that they cannot move on (can't shift gears)			
Is frustrated easily			
Apt to be impulsive, heedless or accident prone			
Marked mood variations, outbursts or tantrums			
Fine motor			
Has a poor pencil grip			
Has difficulty drawing, colouring, copying and cutting, and avoids these activities			
Draws lines that are tight, wobbly, too faint or too dark, breaks pencils often			
Has difficulty writing on the line			
Lacks a well-established dominant side after four years of age			
Academic (presenting problems)			
Is distractible			
Is a slow worker			
Has difficulty organising their work			
Has difficulty following directions			
Has difficulty finishing tasks			
Has difficulty remembering information			
Has a short attention span			
Is hyperactive and restless			
Skips words/lines when reading			
Has difficulty with spelling			
Has difficulty with maths			