



Fox Wood School OT Ideas



Generic Ideas to help keep our Children Calm and Organised at Home

Where do I start?

If you have access to your child's School Sensory Steps, pull these out to give you some guidance, as these have been specifically formulated for your child from information you and teaching staff have provided. If you do not have access to your child's Sensory Steps then contact school to request a copy.

If your child does not have a set of Sensory Steps and you need some additional ideas to help at home, try some of strategies below. Watch carefully to see how your child responds looking for signs of whether the activity calms them down or excites/overloads them as sometimes children can respond very differently to sensory input! Overloading signs to watch out for are and when an activity should be ceased are; loss of balance/co-ordination, lashing out, agitation, refusing to do something, crying or laughing hysterically, skin flushes/goes pale, verbalising or indicating no/stop, sweating.

It is suggested that all children are supervised whilst carrying out the below activities to ensure their safety. If you are concerned that any of the activities pose a risk to your child, please do not attempt. All activities are carried out at your own risk.

Generic Ideas!

- Routine is key for our children and they thrive on this. Try and choose activities from the list on this programme that you could do first thing on waking, before you sit down to do any focused activity and/or at mealtimes, before a known task that they struggle with and to help calm them before bedtime.
- Exercise is really important for both you as parents and your child! Where possible just being able to get out of the house and go for a walk can help. Try compiling a bag of sensory fidgets to take with you to help keep them occupied and interested. See Calming Ideas for Out and About on the Fox Wood Website for ideas.
- Many of our children struggle with elements of understanding and expressing themselves. Establishing a clear routine will help with this but try and use your advised communication strategies from Speech and Language Therapy but also PEC symbols/objects of reference to reduce anxiety. If you need additional symbols, please contact school to request what you feel would be beneficial.
- Be mindful that big changes such as during lockdown can heighten anxiety for your child and this is likely to be impacting on their behaviour.
- Try and provide a clear calm down/safe place for your child to go to when they are feeling uneasy/overloaded/agitated. This can be a quiet corner, a tent, a homemade den, behind the sofa. Try and encourage your child to help them make the den with you, putting in the things that you know they like - fiddles, minimal light, torch, favourite chew, blankets and cushions for them to cuddle up under, something that smells familiar of you (hanky with your perfume on).

Activities

☺ **Peanut Ball Activities** (These can be purchased from Amazon)
(Demonstrate you doing the activities first and then they are more likely to have a go!)

- Have one out for them to sit on or roll over in the lounge.
- Encourage them to roll on their tummy over the ball, walking forwards on their hands.
- If they will tolerate it, you can pull them back with their feet.
- Get them to lie on their back and roll the ball over their body slowly putting pressure through the ball. (Make sure you do this slowly and calmly up to their neck and then back down to their toes).
- If they will, try and get them to do the above on you, as they will be putting deep pressure through their hands onto the ball whilst rolling it!
- Other activities - rolling the ball up the wall and then encouraging them to push the ball into the wall.
- See if you can both lie on the floor opposite each other and push your feet into the ball and lift up in the air if you can!



Sensory challenge peanut ball ideas -

<https://www.facebook.com/FoxWoodSchool/videos/675812769866805/>

☺ **Calming Simon Says** - Try using some of the deep pressure calming activities within this sensory challenge - <https://www.facebook.com/FoxWoodSchool/videos/935405626890076/>

☺ **Hot dog game** - where your child lies across the end of a blanket/duvet and is rolled up. Add the onions, pressing down onto them and squeeze the ketchup in (play of course!) and then once rolled up press down firmly onto them. Then reverse it and get them to roll you up! Make sure you always have the head out of the covers but the arms in!



Sensory challenge hot dog ideas

<https://www.facebook.com/FoxWoodSchool/videos/737538426827525/>

☺ **Linear swinging** is a great activity for organising and calming. It is a great way to start the day as soon as they get up to go and do some swinging before breakfast to help organise themselves. Swinging can be done by either sitting on the seat, folding themselves over the seat on their tummy with head down, or helping to support them and stand on the seat. Just make sure they are well balanced and support if not. You can put an inflatable mattress underneath for reassurance if they are trying to learn to balance themselves. Practice getting them to high five you whilst swinging or reaching out for items that they like, or bang a drum that you could hold as they swing. You can hold the peanut/therapy ball in front of them to swing and push their feet off whilst swinging.

☺ **Rocking** Again rocking backwards and forwards in a linear movement is calming and we often see children do this automatically. Try just rocking them on your lap (sitting on the sofa or therapy ball).

☺ **Running games** to touch specific things, i.e. put pictures up around the garden or house and get them to run with you to match the same picture you have in your hand (Snap!)

☺ **Animal Walks** - pretend to be different animals crawling across the floor - snake, worm rolling across the floor, bear walking on all 4's, frog or kangaroo jumping. Sensory Challenge ideas -

<https://www.facebook.com/729249967254767/posts/1418950288284728/?vh=e&d=n>

☺ **Pushing teddy around** - pushing teddy around in a dollies buggy is a lovely way to encourage movement and resistance at the same time through play. Try finding a way to increase the weight of the buggy by attaching a small bag to the buggy and putting extra things in this. Get them to go shopping around the house for things to put in the small bag!

☺ **Pushing and pulling items** - use boxes or plastic tubs for them to load up and push around the house. You can encourage by putting them in the box (with the top left open!) and pushing them. Make sure you use a laminate floor surface. Sensory Challenge ideas -

<https://www.facebook.com/FoxWoodSchool/videos/1865214347110617/>

☺ **Pull up bars** -Using a pull up bar on a door frame or a rung of a climbing frame to hold on and dangle from (with a cushion underneath) is a great way to get the sensory input.

☺ **Climbing up slides** -Try encouraging them to pull themselves up the slide, either climbing or on their tummy pulling up with their arms.

☺ **Water play** - encourage filling up of buckets or tubs of water or any sensory media and carrying them to fill the paddling pool or watering the plants. Sensory challenge ideas -

<https://www.facebook.com/FoxWoodSchool/videos/381704932790268/>

☺ **Hanging upside down over things!** - Putting your head down gives you lots of increased information about your head position and children love to do this! Dangle off the side of the sofa, over stacked cushions, over a swing seat, off the side of the bed. You can put an activity on the floor to play with whilst dangling over. Always allow them to sit up when they want to. Sensory challenge ideas -

<https://www.facebook.com/FoxWoodSchool/videos/651459818763014/>

☺ **Making a den** -Making dens can be lots of fun and a great way of providing a place to go when things become too much or they need calming. Sensory challenge ideas -

<https://www.facebook.com/FoxWoodSchool/videos/3934731203218549/>

☺ **Playing with cushions** - Use sofa cushions, pillows, teddies, duvets and make giant towers encouraging him to lift each item and put on top of each other - get them to knock them down. Then try making a sandwich with them being a layer between the cushions and getting them to wriggle out. Sensory Challenge ideas - <https://www.facebook.com/FoxWoodSchool/videos/220797629273959/>

☺ **Trampette/trampoline** - Just standing on a trampoline or trampette gives increased movement and sensory input. Try adding a game whilst they are on the trampoline or trampette - high fiving, getting them to throw a ball, sitting on the peanut ball whilst on the trampoline. Find something for them to jump onto from the trampette/trampoline after finishing - this can be an inflatable mattress or giant homemade crash pad (duvet cover filled with lots of pillows, cushions and teddies). Sensory challenge ideas - <https://www.facebook.com/FoxWoodSchool/videos/3277370358947886/>

☺ **Access to vibrating toys** - Vibration gives lots of deep proprioceptive feedback and can be very calming and organising for **some** children. Vibrating toothbrushes, animal massagers, vibrating dinosaur eggs or just basic hand held back massagers are available from amazon.

☺ **Massage** - Deep touch pressure can be very calming to an individual. This is different to light touch which can cause a fight or flight response and many of our children dislike. Firm squeezes to the shoulders and forearms. Getting them to wrap arms around themselves and give a big squeeze or a big bear hug from you.

☺ **Music and Rhythm** - Let music be a part of daily routine. Have a bath song, a dressing song, a meal time song. It helps with attention and sequencing. Simply sing about the activities as they are happening! Try and find songs with a really good rhythm i.e. The Grand old Duke York, The ants go marching 2 by 2. Use songs to help with everyday tasks. When you march stomp really heavily.

☺ **Dinosaur Eggs!** - Create fun things that they can safely bash! Look at the dinosaur egg sensory challenge! - <https://www.facebook.com/FoxWoodSchool/videos/528753947787130/>

Ideas for our mouths to help with being calm and organised

Our jaws have muscles around them and often children use chewing or biting down on something as a way to self-calm and organise themselves. It is therefore really important to provide them with regular safe activities that they can engage with their mouth.

☺ **Try different chewy types of food with them** - dried mango, liquorice, corn on the cob, beef jerky, raw vegetables. Once you find one that they will tolerate, where healthy provide regularly.

☺ **Sucking cold ice lollies or encouraging them to drink through bottles with straws or sports bottles will help.** If they will tolerate, try making smoothies or thick milkshakes that are hard work for them to suck to get it out. This works their mouth muscles giving lots of proprioceptive feedback.



☺ **Chew buddies and chew jewellery** are also great ways to have something constantly there for them to chew as they are on safe quick release necklaces. When they go to put something inappropriate in their mouth - encourage them to chew the chew instead.

☺ **Oral Motor activities** such as blowing bubbles, creating bubbles through a straw in a basin of water, blowing items across the table - feather, bits of paper, sweetie papers (anything light really!)

Ideas for hands that like to fiddle!

☺ **Lots of sensory tactile play** - create a tray of messy media.

You can hide things in the media, explore the feelings, sounds, smells, textures and visual movement when pouring. If they are reluctant to put their hands in, provide different items for them to push the media around. Children who dislike getting their hands dirty will tolerate dry media much better so start with this i.e. dry sand, lentils, uncooked pasta. Never place their hands in a tray, you model the behaviour you want to see them do and give them a utensil to get the interested.

Try having the following items available for your child to use in the trays to help them explore:

• Cups • Egg cartons • Funnels • Ice trays • Scoops • Spoons • Tongs • Twigs • Pastry cutters • Wooden spoons • Pans and Cars!

Try using in the trays; Pasta • Gravy granules • Black beans • Rice • Yogurt • Popcorn kernels • Oats • Cereals • Porridge (warm and cold) • Lentils • Jelly • Ice • Custard • Flour • Cornflour and water • Coffee beans • Squirty cream • Angel delight • Water.

☺ **Stretchy or squishy toys.**

☺ Edible dough or play doh. Ideas on Fox Wood Website -

http://www.foxwoodschool.org.uk/storage/secure_download/RVNwQIY2enMxenRQUDBtYUNnSHM1UT09

☺ Koosh balls.

☺ Lego or interlinking cubes/fiddles.

☺ Stickers or Velcro stuck down with things to stick on and pull off.

☺ Bubble wrap.

☺ Paper to rip up.

☺ Bendy pipe cleaners or Wikki sticks.

Lucinda Warren - Fox Wood School Occupational Therapist - January 2021