

Humber Sensory Processing Service

Community Services for Children
aged 0-18 years



Visual processing

Visual processing differences can sometimes be difficult to identify and can be mistaken for other diagnoses. This is when you will need to become a detective and look for patterns of behaviours or when your child is finding things tricky. Ask questions to help give you clues about what it is that is challenging – activities may need to be broken down dependent on your child's learning needs. The following information will provide you with adjustments that can be made or things to consider and trial to see if this makes a difference – sometimes it's a case of trying and seeing if it helps.

Visual processing differences

Children with visual processing differences can be impacted in lots of ways; this can look like: -

- Aversion to bright lights, bright colours, and 'clutter'.
- Difficulties with reading and writing.
- Avoiding reading or written tasks.
- Difficulty with hand-eye coordination.
- Avoiding activities that include visual perception – such as sports, or jigsaw puzzles.
- Motion sickness.
- Being clumsy or unbalanced.
- Poor visual attention – easily distracted by movement or objects in the environment.
- Difficulty finding and organising belongings.
- Difficulties with memory – especially visual information.
- Difficulties in social communication.



If you think your child's vision is having a negative impact, it's important to consult your GP to investigate any physical concerns. They may refer your child to an Optometrist – a specialist in eye function – for further investigation.

Strategies for the home environment

- Consider reducing visual stimulation by limiting posters or wall art and by reducing surface clutter.
- If your child is over-sensitive, consider decorating in muted tones as multiple colours or bright colours might be overwhelming.
- Use sunglasses in bright environments.
- Consider setting your devices to 'night-mode' or downloading an app such as 'f.lux' that adjusts the lighting on your devices to reduce eye strain.
- If your child enjoys reading, consider purchasing or loaning books that are printed in a larger font, or using a typoscope or reading ruler to break up blocks of text.
- Match and sorting activities such as spot the difference or sorting coloured buttons etc. Make sure any activities are achievable – to reduce frustration, you may want to increase the difficulty slowly overtime.
- Visual memory games – for example, recalling a pattern of images.
- Throwing, catching and target practice games.
- If your child is unbalanced and needs to look at the floor when walking, try encouraging them to extend their line of sight further along the path to help improve posture and stability.



- Keeping your garden free of leaves in the autumn will reduce visual input and may help your child feel more secure on their feet when playing outdoors.
- If your child suffers with travel sickness, they may benefit from travelling in the front seat of the car, or a seat where they are able to see the road in front of them. Make sure this is done safely and following highways advice.

"I like to ride my bike because it helps me focus; but when there are lots of leaves on the floor, I can find it overwhelming and difficult to balance. I try to improve my line of sight, so I am not staring at the ground, and cycle slower to try and manage it."

Strategies for the learning environment

- Seat the student at the front of the class.
- Sit students away from visual distractions e.g., windows or doors.
- Check the lighting in the room,



- Make sure the area that the student is looking at for work is reduced of visual distractions, for example around the white board at the front.
- Provide only one task or activity at a time. If a student has three tasks to complete, consider printing these on three separate sheets, or cutting the paper into three pieces.
- Use a multisensory approach during lessons; it may be easier for some students to visually focus during kinaesthetic (movement) lessons rather than auditory.
- Use heavy work activities to support regulation – see handout on self-regulation and attention.
- Use a privacy screen to decrease visual distractions.
- Using a reading ruler, to help reduce extra visual input when reading and maintain their place within the text.
- Trial marking a highlighted line down the left of the page to support uniform handwriting.
- Try placing extra dotted lines or coloured lines in handwriting books to provide help when practicing letter placement, shape, and spacing.
- Wearing sunglasses if the child is sensitive to bright light.
- If copying from the board, or reading information from the projector is difficult, provide the child with a printed handout.

“Listen to a piece of information and three days later you’ll remember 10% of it. Add a picture and you’ll remember 65%”

(Medina, 2014)

