



SAINT FINIAN'S  
NATIONAL SCHOOL

# **Sensory Room and Space Policy 2023**

## **Sensory Room Policy**

### **Introduction**

- Saint Finians NS is a mixed DEIS Band 1 primary school situated in Glenties Park in Finglas South, Dublin 11. The school has fourteen mainstream classroom teachers, six SET teachers under the Continuum of Support Framework, one part time SET teacher (3 hours) shared with another local school and seven Special Needs Assistants.
- SET accommodation includes 6 support rooms and one Nurture Room and one sensory room. Supplementary teaching takes place by withdrawal to the support rooms and during regular class teaching hours.
- Pupils with Special Educational Needs have shared access to an SNA where necessary and where specified through the Continuum of Support allocation model. All pupils are fully integrated in all mainstream classes and activities.

St Finian's National School seeks to promote healthy lifestyles and the wellbeing of our school community, in a safe, supportive and non-threatening environment. Through its policies, procedures, activities and structures the school aims to create an environment in which:

- People feel valued
- Self-esteem is fostered
- There is respect, tolerance and fairness
- People in difficulty are supported
- There is open and honest communication
- Effort is recognised and striving for improvement is taught
- Difference and diversity are valued
- Conflict is handled constructively
- Social, moral and civic values are promoted
- Initiative and creativity are stressed.

These aims are implemented in the daily transactions between management, staff, children and the wider school community.

### **Belief Statement**

- We value and respect the uniqueness of each child in our school community. We strive to empower pupils with diverse needs to reach their fullest potential as individuals and as members of the school and wider community.
- Through the facilitation of special education teaching for children with special needs, we also take on a trauma-informed/nurture approach to teaching and learning. Children may have identified special educational needs and may also present with additional care or behavioural needs. Our goal as a school staff is to meet the needs of ALL children – whether that be children with learning difficulties, or children who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

### **Aims and Outcomes**

Our principal aim is to optimise the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties and/or children who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences, to achieve levels of proficiency in literacy, numeracy and social/emotional competencies before leaving primary school. This support may be provided by the class teacher and/or the SET team and our Special Needs Assistants (SNA Team).

### **Overall aims of using the sensory room in Saint Finians:**

- To develop a positive attitude towards school in pupils who have a disability, who experience academic difficulty or difficulty with managing their emotions or behaviour.
- To develop positive self-esteem in our pupils and
- To enable pupils accompanied by an SNA to learn to use the equipment in the sensory room to ‘up- regulate’ or ‘down-regulate’ according to their needs
- To develop positive self-esteem in our pupils

- To increase attendance and keep the child engaged in school by explicitly teaching self-management/self-regulation skills and
- Encouraging the development of meaningful relationships using the Teacher's/SNA's nurture skills and their 'Brain Calm Training' in the sensory room/sensory place.

## **Purpose**

The sensory room offers a nurturing, safe, non-threatening and supportive environment. It is used to facilitate empowerment, self-organisation, relaxation, sensory awareness, activity tolerance and general awareness of self, peers and the environment.

The policy applies to all staff and students making use of the sensory room facilities.

## **Usage**

*As those accessing the room have differing needs, we recognise that one size does not fit all. Equipment will be used in line with a child's O.T. report recommendations and where this is not provided, we will use the room for relaxation purposes only.*

S.N.A.s, Support teachers and class teachers will liaise to devise and plan the best use of equipment for the individual child.

## **Access**

Identified students should have time in the sensory room identified as an activity on their Personal Pupil Plan. (PPP)

There will be no more than one adult and 2 students with access to the sensory room at any time.

Under no circumstances should students be left alone in the sensory room at any time.

A monitoring system will be in place to ensure that the sensory room is not abused or over used.

### **Management of Equipment**

Equipment must be turned off after each use and only one piece of sensory equipment is to be used at a time to ensure the child is not over stimulated.

In conjunction with the school's Safety Statement:

- Electrical equipment is checked on a weekly basis (SNA responsibility)
- Equipment is kept clean and checked on a daily basis (SNA responsibility)
- The room and its equipment is checked on a weekly basis for damage or faults (SNA responsibility)
- Damaged equipment is removed and repaired or replaced as soon as possible (SNA team to notify principal or designated post holder.)

At the end of each session floor items should be replaced back in the storage box provided and the room returned to its original state.

### **Child Protection**

- Where staff are working 1:1 with students, they should not be lying alongside students.
- There will be a door with a glass panel for transparency.

- Parents will be given a sensory room policy and will give written consent to their child's supervised access to the sensory room.

## **Sensory Space**

A sensory space can positively impact a child's learning and wellbeing when used appropriately. It is important to consider how a sensory space is being used to meet the needs of the children. This is the most effective way to ensure the success of the sensory space.

Each classroom and learning support room has been furnished with a sensory space for pupils. The school has installed sensory activities in the corridors.

## **Key points to consider before using the sensory space**

- Try to schedule in whole class or group movement breaks frequently throughout the day to support all pupils' regulation
- Use the spaces as proactively as possible.
- It is important to never force a sensory activity.

## **Creating the sensory space in a classroom.**

Each of our sensory spaces has a bean bag, a lava lamp and a selection of fidget toys. A timer should be used to facilitate how long the child should be there. Class furniture is used to act as a separator. They are easily accessible and can support all children in the classroom. They act as a calming space throughout the day.

## **Creating the sensory space in the corridor**

The school has sensory trails installed. They consist of simple sensory trails that can be completed when the students are transitioning from one room to the

other or going to the toilets. These provide creative movement breaks to the individual or groups while learning. They provide the children with proprioceptive and vestibular input to support their attention, self-regulation and transitions in school

### **How and when to use our sensory spaces.**

#### Plan and prepare

- Sensory space time should be planned
- Prepare the children before transitioning.
- Use timers and visual schedules.

#### Supervision

- Supervision of an adult is required
- no more than two children allowed in the room at any one time
- Only one SNA in the sensory room

#### Use

- Should not be used as a reward or for managing behaviour

#### Student Voice

- Give some choice in the sensory space
- Never force a sensory activity

#### Equipment

- Consider what equipment is being used.
- Not all equipment needs to be used.

#### Safety

- The school must ensure that equipment is of a good standard. Appropriate training, if required to use any equipment, should be provided.

### **Ratification and Review**

This policy was presented to the Board and ratified in \_\_\_\_\_. The policy will be subject to periodic review.

The date from which the policy will apply is the date of adoption by the Board of Management. Implementation of the policy will be monitored by the Principal of the school.

**Signed:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_

Principal