

WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL, HEDGEHOGS NURSERY AND SUNBEAMS CLUB



Sensory Play Policy



**Updated: Sept 2026
Review Date: Sept 2027**

Policy Statement

In Woodlands Primary School, Hedgehogs Nursery and Sunbeams Club, we follow the EYFS. We believe that sensory play is essential to the early learning and development of babies and toddlers aged 9 to 36 months. Sensory-rich environments provide young children with opportunities to explore, discover, and make sense of the world around them. This policy outlines our approach to sensory play and the environment in line with the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)*.

Aims

- To provide a safe, stimulating, and sensory-rich environment tailored to the developmental needs of babies, toddlers and preschoolers.
- To support the development of the Prime Areas of Learning in the EYFS: Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Communication and Language, and Physical Development.
- To encourage curiosity, independence, and early cognitive development through multi-sensory exploration.
- To ensure that sensory experiences are inclusive, age appropriate, and accessible to all children.

Sensory Play and the EYFS

Sensory play supports several key aspects of the EYFS, including:

- **Communication and Language:** Encouraging babies to respond to sounds, textures, and sights using gestures, expressions, and emerging language.
- **Physical Development:** Promoting fine and gross motor skills as babies reach for, grasp, and manipulate sensory materials.
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development:** Building confidence, independence, and positive interactions through shared sensory experiences.
- **Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design:** Introducing babies to varied materials, smells, sounds, and textures in a safe, exploratory setting.
- **Literacy and Mathematics:** Supporting early language, counting, sorting, and problem-solving skills as babies explore sensory materials through play.

4. The Sensory Environment

- Hedgehogs, Squirrels and Foxes are designed to be calm, welcoming, and enriching environments, enhanced with a variety of sensory materials.
- Resources are selected to offer a range of textures, sounds, smells, and visual stimuli (e.g., soft fabrics, natural objects, musical instruments, sensory bottles, and lights).
- Materials are rotated regularly to maintain interest and support different stages of development.
- Natural lighting, soft colours, and gentle sounds are used to create a soothing atmosphere conducive to exploration and emotional regulation.

5. Types of Sensory Play

Sensory play within Woodlands Nursery may include:

- **Tactile play:** soft toys, textured fabrics, water trays, sand, and safe messy play (e.g., oats, jelly, foam). Age appropriate.
- **Auditory play:** Musical instruments, sound toys, singing, and listening to calming or stimulating sounds.

- **Visual play:** Mobiles, mirrors, coloured lights, and high-contrast images.
- **Movement input using soft play equipment**

6. Inclusion and Individual Needs

- Sensory play is adapted to meet the individual developmental stage and sensory preferences of each baby and child
- Practitioners observe children closely to identify preferences, sensitivities, or signs of overstimulation.
- Babies, toddlers and preschoolers with additional needs or sensory processing differences are supported with personalised strategies and resources.

7. Health and Safety

- All sensory materials are non-toxic, age-appropriate, and checked for potential choking hazards.
- Sensory activities are always supervised.
- Equipment and resources are cleaned and maintained to the highest hygiene standards.

8. Staff Role and Interaction

- Practitioners play an active role in facilitating sensory play, modelling language, and supporting children's exploration.
- Staff use open-ended questions, gestures, and descriptive language to enrich learning during sensory experiences.
- Observations from sensory play contribute to each child's individual learning journey and assessment records.

9. Partnership with Parents

- Families are encouraged to share their child's sensory preferences and experiences from home.
- Staff provide suggestions and ideas for sensory activities that can be continued at home to support development and consistency.

10. Monitoring and Review

Sensory play provision and the environment are regularly evaluated by the room leads and EYFS lead. As a setting we will also use feedback from the children's families. This is important when using observations of the children's engagement in the activities to inform ongoing planning and learning opportunities.