### Project summary

Working closely with an Occupational Therapist, we have developed a programme of exercises and routines which, together with the creation of a Sensory Room, is making a positive impact on children's enjoyment and attitude towards learning as well as raising standards for children with additional needs. Following this impact, we are now extending the use of the Sensory Room and the exercise routines to be made available to all children who could benefit educationally, behaviourally, socially and emotionally.

### Specific aspect of practice to be accredited?

Raising of standards and of inclusion, excellence and enjoyment of school life for all pupils, especially those with additional needs

### Aspect of Every Child Matters addressed:

- [ ] Be healthy
- [X] Stay Safe
- [X] Enjoy and achieve
- [ ] Make a positive contribution
- [ ] Achieve economic well-being

### What were you hoping to achieve?

To enable children with additional needs to tolerate learning within the classroom for longer.

### How did you identify the need for this practice?

From our work with Brenda Wildish (Occ Therapist) and work within the local school's cluster we identified that some of our children were not able to achieve the results expected due to poor body posture, poor writing skills (because of poor body posture) and poor gross motor skills. We also identified that our rising number of SEN children would benefit from a clear programme of support to encourage and develop better gross motor skills and fine motor skills as well as support their emotional and behavioural needs through posture training and sensory development.
Briefly describe the main characteristics of the school?

Clifton Primary School has 240 pupils and has a wide variety of socio-economic groupings from which it draws its roll. Currently the school has 11 CLA pupils and 32 pupils on the SEN register, of which 16 are on School Action Plus, ESAP or with statements.

What did you do?

The first milestone was to find a room or area within the school. A space and the means of isolating it were identified with the Headteacher. To begin with, an area was cordoned off which in the first instance was suitable as a short term option to see how beneficial such an area might be. It soon became apparent that it was too small an area for working with more than one child at a time and it was also just a part of an existing larger room and therefore there were other distractions for the children. So:

- a visit to another school was arranged to see how they had set up their sensory room
- discussions took place with my headteacher and Brenda Wildish (Occ Therapist) regarding the needs and access arrangements for a permanent room within the school
- permission was sought and gained to clear and refurbish an existing room within the school
- Training was obtained from Brenda Wildish
- Research was conducted via the internet into advantages and usage of a sensory room within primary education and the benefits for children
- research was conducted into the equipment and look of a good, quality sensory room
- application to PTA and external funding bodies to purchase basic necessary equipment as well as from school budget for general items for refurbishment
- good sized room allocated, redecorated and refurbished to needs identified with headteacher and Brenda Wildish
- guidance and advice information for uses of the sensory room were then written
- timetable was organised to support full usage and monitoring of the room’s purpose, plus enabling drop-in visits when needed
- record sheets and planning for individual children was kept to support monitoring and also support other TA's using the room in the future
- donations of other items such as beanbags and safety mirror were sought and were obtained
- Training from Brenda Wildish for all Teaching Assistants in the relevant programmes to support fine motor skill development.
### Which members of the establishment and/or wider community have been involved and what was their role?

I led the project on behalf of the teaching assistant team in the school, giving the team focus and direction to complete the project - I also found out all of the relevant information to support the room’s development and managed all of the other people within the project.

The Headteacher supported this development from the start and worked alongside me to create the space (rehousing other equipment and resources) and providing time for me to develop the room as quickly as possible. He also gave advice on finding funding for additional equipment. Mr Slater has also worked with the Governing Body to further this project on my behalf.

Brenda Wildish (Occ Therapist) - the school was already working with Brenda and through her we had already started on our fine motor skill development programme. This led to her being involved in the overall development of the Sensory Room and her advice and guidance was invaluable. She continues to support the room’s development and has given staff training on how to use it and how to develop it further.

Teaching Assistants - all of the TA's have supported me throughout its development and have already seen the benefits that the room offers to the children they are supporting within the school. They are now supporting the development of the planning and monitoring sheets.

Teaching staff have also seen the project as very positive due to the impact it is having on certain children and how they return to the main classroom from small group time in the sensory room. All are seeing the project as being hugely beneficial and more ideas are being brought in about how the room can be used to support other identified children further.

### How has the progress of the project been monitored and evaluated?

The development of the Sensory Room has become part of the School's Development Plan and I have completed an Action Plan for the current academic year. This is being monitored and evaluated by the Headteacher and Governing Body through evidence that I supply to them. In summer 2009 I will review the action plan fully and then write the following year's action plan as part of the School Development Plan for 2009-10.

TA's also monitor and evaluate their own practice and discuss this with one another to ensure that we provide the best quality of support we can through the sensory room.

### How has the practice been modified or improved during development?

The most significant modification was the sudden move from our small space to an identified room. This was due to the positive effects being seen so quickly. Further development of the room through funding has allowed further modifications such as lighting changes, slide projector purchase, mirror at low level, and matting in room for working on floor.
Record sheets have also been reviewed and re-worked to make them simpler to complete and more useful for evaluations and monitoring purposes as well as sharing good practice with one another.

**What has been the impact of the project on pupils’ learning, achievement or enjoyment and how has this been measured?**

- The children using the room are much more in control of themselves (be it behaviourally, physically or emotionally, or all three). This has meant a higher chance of being able to work within the classroom for most of the day, plus better motor control skills enabling them to take a fuller part in lessons and activities. We have already seen the impact through the OT's assessment records and data analysis.
- Children’s feedback is very positive and seen as a wonderful place to support their learning and enable them to achieve much more.
- Staff have noted the calming effect the room is having on some children, resulting in better communication and concentration.

**What are the next stages in the development process?**

- To provide training to all staff on the use of the sensory room and not just the TAs, enabling more use of the room for other children who may not have yet been identified.
- To further expand the programmes provided by the OT and how they are used to first identify children who need motor skill development support and then provide action to support them.
- To purchase further support equipment from within the school budget as well as looking at further fundraising and funding from other sources.
- To enable access to the Sensory Room during playtimes and lunchtimes for children who need a 'chill out' zone.
- Other schools are planning to visit our Sensory Room to assist in the setting up of their own.

**What aspects of this practice may be useful for other establishments to consider?**

Have a good look around and visit as many different ones as you can; research on the internet and ask the people who know - such as the OT; above all, plan out what you want from a room and then identify a room that could be used and used well - small spaces are not really big enough and its difficult to set everything up to then move it to another location - time and cost of moving!

A room like this can be such a benefit to all schools provided a clear programme of usage and support is in operation.

**Any other comments:**

This has been a great project to manage and has also enabled me to develop as a teaching assistant within the school and the community. The benefits we are seeing from the children are wonderful and I hope that from this sort of support, those benefits will be far-reaching into their future.