



## Evaluating the Impact of Listen and Move

### Context

Listen and Move (The Loyne Specialist School, 2012) is designed to reduce challenging behaviours influenced by sensory processing differences experienced in children with autism. This research briefing draws on evidence from an MEd Dissertation entitled: **The impact of listen and move on children with autism and additional sensory processing anomalies**. Its purpose is to provide a brief background and highlight key findings for schools interested in the underpinning research for this intervention. Initial observations about how the Listen and Move body awareness programme can aid relaxation and promote learning for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) have already been reported (Bradbury, 2012) and a further more detailed report is planned.

### Autism and ASD

Autism is widely accepted as a biological based neurodevelopmental condition involving three characteristic impairments 1) communication, 2) reciprocal social interaction, and 3) restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests and activities. First recognised in 1980, the most recent definition by The American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-V* (APA, 2013), brings together the first two, communication and social interaction, on the basis that they are so closely linked. In the 2013 DSM-V definition, it is accepted that people with autism may experience sensory processing differences leading to a different sensory awareness of their environment.

### Sensory Differences

There are a range of sensory differences and explanations for them for example, Boucher (2009) discusses sensory differences in individuals with autism including ‘both over- and under-responsiveness to stimuli in all the main sensory channels’ and ‘vulnerability to sensory overload’ (Boucher, 2009; p.198). Research by Miller et al. (2007) identifies three categories of sensory behaviours: Sensory over-responsivity (SOR), sensory under-responsivity (SUR) and sensory seeking (SS).

### Listen and Move

Listen and Move is a *Sensory stimulation interventions* (SSI), developed by staff at The Loyne Specialist School alongside physiotherapist advice to provide a cost and time effective intervention that would be practical to deliver and help “*promote increased body awareness and, most importantly, provides increased proprioceptive feedback, which we have found to be very calming for many of our pupils*” (Bradbury, 2012).

Listen and move consists of a music CD which lasts 20 minutes and includes 14 activities with photo illustrations. Its appeal as an intervention for school relates to:

- **Time** – lasts 20 minutes and is practical to timetable and build into the school day
- **Resources** – only requires yoga mat and small ball, hall space and CD
- **Staffing** – routine nature of the programme requires minimal training and enables staff to gain confidence and expertise in a short time.



Its aim is to provide routine and predictability, soothing, rhythmical music, deep pressure, linear movements, rocking movements, flexion and warmth in order ‘to improve self-control, interaction with others and the ability to express feelings’. The ultimate aim of the intervention is to impact on learning, where behaviour caused by sensory sensitivities has previously been a barrier.

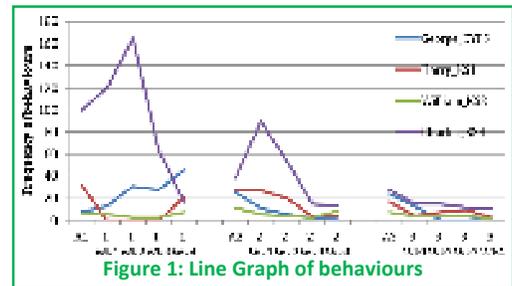
For copies of the Listen and Move Resource [www.sen-learning-resources.co.uk/Lets-Listen-and-Move.html](http://www.sen-learning-resources.co.uk/Lets-Listen-and-Move.html) and further details about training and other SEN resources [www.sen-learning-resources.co.uk/Home.html](http://www.sen-learning-resources.co.uk/Home.html)

## Research

The research involved four children, one from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and one from Key Stages 1 to 3. Using a standard sensory profile to establish individual baseline assessments, the pupils participated in three, 4 or 5 week phases of daily Listen and Move sessions. Additional baseline measures were taken at the start of each new phase. After each session staff undertook a 10 minute observation of behaviours (see figure 1), and kept a diary of related classroom behaviours. This provided quantitative and qualitative data before, during and after the intervention. Interviews with teachers and staff working with the pupils were also collected.

## Findings

Detailed case studies for each pupil have been prepared; the following results provide a summary of key findings. Challenging



behaviours were recorded on basis of frequency and severity Group A includes the most severe / assaultive behaviours, hitting and kicking; B, spitting and screaming/shouting; C, least severe, dropping and crying.

- All pupils experienced a reduction in the frequency of their challenging behaviours:
  - by the end of the intervention
  - in phases 2 and 3
- Although, the frequency of behaviour for the KS3 pupil increased in the first few weeks of phases 1 and 2, overall there was a decrease in frequency in phase 1 of 83, phase 2 of 25 and phase 3 of 16.
- There was a decrease in the severity of the behaviours over the intervention:
  - Phase 1 dominated by group A and B behaviours
  - Phase 3 group A behaviours negligible
- A 100% of staff agreed that the frequency and severity of challenging behaviours had decreased in class, not just the observed sessions.
- There was a slight increase in the frequency of the challenging behaviours for all pupils during school holidays when they did not participate in Listen and Move.

For the pupils involved Listen and Move altered their behaviour within the classroom and feedback from staff indicated pupils were more willing to participate in unfamiliar activities including ones they had previously rejected due to sensory sensitivities; transitions were also noted to improve. The duration of challenging behaviour was not specifically captured, however, staff feedback suggests that there was a notable decrease for the EYFS and KS3 pupils, further observations are required to establish if Listen and Move is helping to develop more adaptive ways of behaving.

## Future Developments

Primary Schools have attended Listen and Move training for use with pupils who are diagnosed with ASD or exhibiting challenging behaviours and there are plans to capture feedback of their experiences. The increase in challenging behaviours during holidays suggests it may be useful to explore use by parents.

## References

- American Psychiatric Association, (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders*. 5th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing.
- Boucher, J. (2009). *The Autistic Spectrum: Characteristics, Causes and Practical Issues*. London: SAGE.
- Bradbury, B. (2012) 'The pressure principle', *Special Educational Needs* available at: [www.senmagazine.co.uk/articles/1012-how-a-body-awareness-programme-can-aid-relaxation-and-promote-learning-for-children-with-asd](http://www.senmagazine.co.uk/articles/1012-how-a-body-awareness-programme-can-aid-relaxation-and-promote-learning-for-children-with-asd)
- Miller, L.J., Anzalone, M.E., Lane, S.J., Cermak, S.A. & Osten, E.T. (2007). Concept Evolution in Sensory Integration: A Proposed Nosology for Diagnosis. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 61(2), 135–40



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