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Regulation Station: A sensory-informed approach to inclusion in a mainstream primary school

What's the BIG Idea for SEND?

Project Focus

Devonshire Primary School introduced the Regulation Station—a sensory-informed provision designed to support pupils with sensory processing difficulties and related needs. The aim was to help these pupils regulate their sensory input in order to access learning more effectively, reduce distress, and promote inclusion within the mainstream classroom.

Introduction

Devonshire is a two-form entry primary school with an attached nursery, located in one of the most deprived areas in England. With 63% of pupils eligible for pupil premium and 26% on the SEND register, the school faces significant challenges, particularly in supporting pupils with complex sensory needs.

The initiative was led by an experienced Additional Needs Teaching Assistant (TA) who is also a parent of a child with SEND. As the school's sensory champion, she worked closely with the SENCo to develop a provision that would meet the needs of pupils who struggle with sensory integration—particularly those in Key Stage 1.

The Regulation Station was designed as a flexible, needs-led space where pupils could access sensory activities either proactively or reactively, depending on their individual needs. It was not intended as a permanent base, but rather as a short-term intervention to help pupils return to class in a regulated state, ready to learn.

Implementation

The implementation of the *Regulation Station* was grounded in research and best practice in sensory integration. Staff leading the provision were trained in Sensory Integration theory and practice, and all Additional Needs TAs received Level 2 Team Teach training. The provision was led by the SENCo and managed by trained staff who worked closely with class teachers to develop personalised timetables and Sensory Passports for each pupil.

The space itself was carefully designed to include sensory circuits—structured sequences of alerting, organising, and calming activities. These circuits were tailored to each child's needs and supported by visual aids and Makaton to ensure accessibility. The room was divided into zones and equipped with resources such as tents, music, and tactile equipment to meet a range of sensory needs.

Implementation (continued)

Access to the Regulation Station was timetabled based on individual Sensory Passports, but pupils could also use it reactively when signs of dysregulation were observed. The provision was monitored through regular feedback from teachers, CPOMS entries, behaviour and attendance data, and family engagement.

Importantly, the responsibility for pupil progress remained with the class teacher. The Regulation Station was a support mechanism—not a substitute for classroom learning.

Outcomes and Impact

The impact of the Regulation Station has been both measurable and transformative. Ofsted's 2024 inspection praised the school's ambition for pupils with SEND and highlighted the effectiveness of its systems for identifying and meeting additional needs.

Parental feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. One parent, initially hesitant about mainstream education, described her child's progress as "amazing," noting that he was now copying sentences and thriving in a way she had never imagined.

Two case studies illustrate the impact:

- **Pupil X**, a Year 3 child with significant sensory needs and autistic traits, initially struggled to remain in class. After accessing the Regulation Station in line with his Sensory Passport, his time in class increased significantly. He now uses a personal regulation box and spends most of his day in class.
- **Pupil Y**, a Reception child with Autism, exhibited extreme behaviours including headbutting and running dangerously. After a term and a half of structured support through the Regulation Station, he now eats lunch with peers and accesses lessons for up to 20 minutes at a time. His dangerous behaviours have reduced, and he is beginning to communicate his need for regulation proactively.

Key Learning

The success of the Regulation Station offers valuable lessons for other schools:

- **Training is essential.** Staff must be trained in Sensory Integration to design effective interventions and write meaningful Sensory Passports.
- **Intentional design matters.** The space must be purposefully structured, with zones that follow a sensory circuit model—alerting, organising, and calming.
- **It's not a classroom alternative.** The provision must remain a short-term intervention, not a permanent base. Class teachers retain responsibility for pupil progress.
- **Monitoring and quality assurance are vital.** Regular data collection, teacher feedback, and family engagement ensure the provision remains effective and aligned with its original intent.
- **Whole-school understanding enhances impact.** Training the wider school community helps embed the provision into the school culture and ensures consistent messaging.
- **Flexibility is key.** While the structure of the provision should be consistent, the resources and strategies must be adaptable to meet the evolving needs of each cohort.

Conclusion

The *Regulation Station* at Devonshire Primary School is a powerful example of how a well-designed, sensory-informed provision can transform the experiences of pupils with complex needs. By focusing on regulation as a pathway to learning, the school has created a model that not only supports individual pupils but also builds staff capacity and strengthens inclusive practice.

This initiative is scalable across schools and Trusts, provided that training, leadership, and fidelity to the model are maintained. With the right investment and commitment, other settings can replicate this approach to support their most vulnerable learners.