

School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences  
Whiteknights  
Reading RG6 6AL

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (FOR PARENT/CAREGIVER) –  
Sensory Reactivity and Classroom Behaviour**

Title of Study: Investigating the relationship between built environment, sensory reactivity and classroom behaviour of autistic children.

Researchers:

Hannah Marcham

[h.marcham@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:h.marcham@pgr.reading.ac.uk)

Supervisor:

Dr Teresa Tavassoli

Email:

[t.tavassoli@reading.ac.uk](mailto:t.tavassoli@reading.ac.uk)

You and your child are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

**What is the purpose of the study?**

Autistic people often have an unusual sensory reactivity, such as being over-sensitive to sounds, lighting or the feeling of certain objects. Autistic children can also find the classroom a difficult place to be able to regulate their emotions and behaviour. There is thought to be a relationship between sensory reactivity and classroom behaviour, which will be explored in this study. Additionally, we will be measuring aspects of the built environment of classrooms, such as ventilation, lighting and Co2 levels. It is hoped that our findings will improve our understanding of the relationship between classroom design, sensory reactivity and classroom behaviour and help to improve the learning experience of autistic children in special schools.

**Why has my child been chosen?**

Your child is being invited to take part because s/he has a diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC).

**Does my child have to take part?**

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. You are both free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

**What will happen if we agree to take part, and what will my child be asked to do?**

If you are happy for your child to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form, and you will be given a copy of the signed information sheet and consent forms to keep for your records. Taking part in the study would involve four 10-20 minute testing sessions with your child taking place within your child's school environment. We will play different sensory games with your child to see how he/she responds to the stimuli. The games will involve looking at a spinning object, feeling different textures and hearing different sounds. The tasks will be presented as a game, and we hope your child will enjoy playing. This will be done on two occasions in the summer term, and two occasions in the winter term. There will also be a behavioural observation, an observer will sit in your child's classroom and observe your child's classroom behaviour for 15 minutes, this will not interfere with your child's classroom learning. This will also take place twice in the summer term, and twice in the winter term. We would also conduct one, ability appropriate, IQ test with your child.

If you agree to participate your child teacher may also be asked some questions about both your child's sensory reactivity, levels of adaptive behaviour and classroom behaviour.

**Will my child's taking part be kept confidential?**

Yes. Any information that you or your child provide will be confidential and no information that could lead to the identification of an individual will be disclosed to anyone outside of the research team. Data will be stored securely on password protected computers.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

It is hoped that the results will be published in scientific journals. Again, no identifying details about your child will be disclosed at any time. We intend to send a concise description of the interpretation of our overall results to all participating schools/families.

**Data Storage**

All of your data will be kept confidential and securely stored, with only a number attached to each participant, and therefore it will not be possible to link any set of data with any individual. A document which links participant names to participant numbers will be stored separately and securely on a password protected computer. All questionnaire data for the project will be destroyed when no longer needed. In accordance with departmental policy, copies of your consent forms and screening forms shall be kept for 5 years before they are destroyed. You may also withdraw your data at any time without having to provide an explanation.

Researchers working in collaboration with the research team led by the lead investigator may wish to access the data from this study, in similarly ethically approved studies. The data collected in this study will be preserved and will be made available to other authenticated researchers only if they agree to maintain the confidentiality of the information provided to them.

**Contact for further information**

If you are interested in participating or you have any questions you can contact

Hannah Marcham at [h.marcham@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:h.marcham@pgr.reading.ac.uk) or

Dr Teresa Tavassoli by email at [t.tavassoli@reading.ac.uk](mailto:t.tavassoli@reading.ac.uk) or by phone +44(0)118 378 8100

*This application has been reviewed by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. And all investigators on this project have had criminal record checks and have been approved by the School to work with children..*

Thank you for considering taking part in this study.

*Hannah Marcham  
Doctoral Researcher*

*Dr Teresa Tavassoli  
Supervisor*