



**Building a  
Neuroinclusive  
School**

TOOL

# Co-Design Your Classroom



Neurodiversity  
in Education  
Project





**Building a  
Neuroinclusive  
School**

# Why It Matters

A well-designed classroom isn't about looking good on Instagram—it's about **creating a space that works for all brains**. By **working with** different sensory needs, not against them, we set up students for success.

## Did you know?

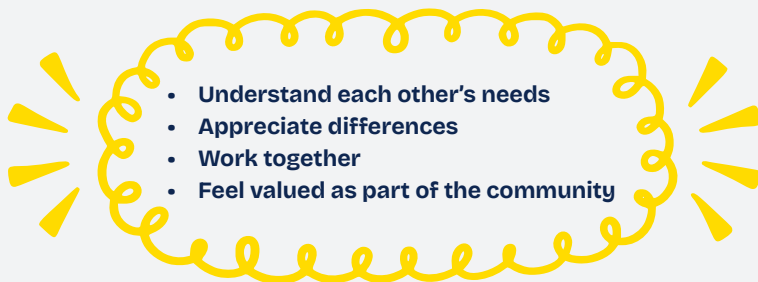
Before learning even begins, the brain processes sensory input first—things like lights, noise, and movement. Only after that can students focus on emotions, social interactions, and learning. If the environment isn't working for them, they're already overloaded before the lesson even starts!



Neurodivergent students often experience sensory input differently— **some are extra sensitive, some need more input, and others fall somewhere in between.** They tell us time and again that classroom setup directly impacts their learning and well-being.

A neuroinclusive classroom recognises, supports, and celebrates all types of brains!

Working with your students to design their classroom helps them:

- 
- **Understand each other's needs**
  - **Appreciate differences**
  - **Work together**
  - **Feel valued as part of the community**

For younger students, this might mean small tweaks to an already set-up space. Older students may be able to design and implement changes with you.

Start small and test what works! Focus on one idea at a time and experiment before adding new changes.

## Three Steps to Co-Designing Your Classroom



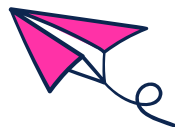
### Step 1.

Talk About  
Sensory Needs



### Step 2.

Take a  
Sensory Audit



### Step 3.

Take Action

# Step 1.

## Talk About Sensory Needs



Open up simple conversations with your students about how their environment helps or hinders their learning.

### Ask quick daily questions:

- What helps you focus in our classroom?"
- What's your ideal learning environment?"

Encourage different ways to respond verbally, in writing, drawing or even showing you physically.

### Top Tip

Want to **boost students' "brain fluency"**?  
Check out our **Welcome to My Brain** card game  
to make these conversations easy and fun!



Scan the [QR code](#) to learn more.



## Step 2.

### Take a Sensory Audit



We don't always notice **how our environment affects us**— and it's even harder to understand how it impacts others.

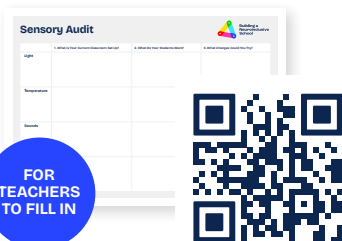
Use our **Sensory Audit** framework to:

1. Assess your current classroom setup
2. Get student input
3. Identify simple changes to test

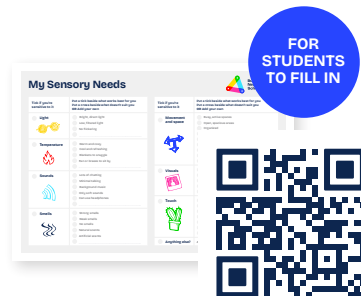
**The key sensory areas we focus on:**

- Lighting
- Visuals
- Movement & space
- Sounds
- Textures
- Temperature
- Smells

#### Before You Start



Grab the **Sensory Audit** template (printable PDF or editable version) using the [QR](#) code here.



Download the **My Sensory Needs** form (printable PDF or editable version) using the [QR](#) code here.

#### Top Tip

Keep students' **My Sensory Needs** forms handy. If learning or behavioural issues pop up, check whether **unmet sensory needs** might be playing a part.

# How to do the Sensory Audit

## 1. Assess your current classroom setup

Look through the sensory areas yourself and make notes on what you notice in your classroom.

## 2. Ask for student input

Use the **My Sensory Needs** form (individually or in groups). Offer different response options to include all communication styles.

Review the responses:

- Are students **mostly aligned or divided** on their needs?
  - Which **sensory areas matter most** to your class?

## 3. Identify simple changes to test

Choose the sensory area that seems to be on top for students. What are some simple changes you could make that could make a real difference?

### Remember

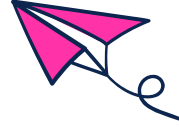
- Changes don't have to be big or involve new purchases
- They may be things that happen some of the time only
  - Simplify your classroom where possible
  - Allow where you can for flexibility & choice

## Here are some ideas for simple changes:

- A comfy reading corner
- A quiet work table
- A basket of headphones
- Alternating talking time & quiet time
- Minimising visual clutter
- Fixing buzzing lights
- A simple low-sensory space (check out our **Sensory-Friendly Space Guide** to learn more!)



## Step 3. Take Action



# TEST, REFLECT, REPEAT!

- Choose **ONE** sensory area and **ONE** small change to try.
- Model the change with students.
- Test it for a week.
- Reflect together—should you keep it, adjust it, or try a new idea?

## Welcome to Our Sensory-Friendly Classroom!

# YOU DID IT!

Co-designing your classroom is a huge step towards creating a space where every brain thrives.

To celebrate, print out our “**Welcome to Our Sensory-Friendly Classroom**” poster! Scan the [QR code](#) to download.

**This is just the beginning!** Creating a **neuroinclusive classroom** is an ongoing journey—but by making small changes, you’re showing every student that they **are seen, valued, and supported.**



Scan the  
QR code to  
download your  
poster.



● **Share Your Ideas** ●

**Share your ideas with us!** Tell us what worked (or didn't!) at [bns@neurodiversity.org.nz](mailto:bns@neurodiversity.org.nz)



**Building A Neuroinclusive School is a FREE learning platform and community-building programme for primary and secondary school leaders and teachers. Check out more FUN and PRACTICAL resources at [www.neurodiversity.org.nz/bns](http://www.neurodiversity.org.nz/bns)**



**Neurodiversity  
in Education  
Project**