

What is Occupational Therapy (OT) for Children?

“Occupational therapy can help babies, infants, children and young people grow, learn, have fun, socialise and play so they can develop, thrive and reach their full potential.

Occupational therapy enables people to participate in daily life to improve their health and wellbeing. Daily life is made up of many activities (or occupations). Occupations for children or young people may include self-care (getting ready to go out, eating a meal, using the toilet), being productive (going to nursery or school, or volunteering) and leisure - playing with friends or doing hobbies.”

Royal College of Occupational Therapy

Occupational Therapy at Hedgewood School

Our therapy team at Hedgewood work to help our children to maximize their access to learning. The OT team support our pupils to achieve as much independence as possible within all areas of their life, including:

- recognising their feelings and emotions – and finding strategies to support them to feel calm and alert i.e. ready to learn,
- support with sensory processing: (some children process their senses differently which can, in turn, impact upon all areas of their life),
- understanding potential triggers for “behaviours” and strategies to support these,
- confidence with different foods and food textures,
- life skills such as changing for PE, using the toilet, sleep, managing cutlery,
- attention and listening skills,
- movement skills – both large and small body movements, supporting children to access their PE lessons as well as other activities such as outdoor play or exploring new environments,
- fine motor skills, such as handwriting, or fastening buttons,
- play with friends including turn taking skills.

Within Hedgewood School, our therapy teams are very much integrated into the school routine. In addition to providing individual and small group sessions, our therapists provide regular training to school staff to support their knowledgeable and understanding, and incorporate OT principles within the daily routine. Each class receives regular ‘Direct Class Support’ from the Therapy teams who provide targeted advice and recommendations in to the class routine and environment, as well as giving strategies and advice for individual children’s needs.

Our class timetables include a variety of multisensory teaching and sensory breaks according to the needs of the children. We incorporate the teaching of independence skills in ‘real life’ setting- for example, teaching the children to put on their own coats for play, or helping to prepare their snacks. Our classrooms provide access to low arousal areas and we also have access to multiple playground spaces to support those children who can find a big play ground overwhelming.

We also have access to a large “swing room” space and a “light room”.

What does our team provide?

Following an initial screening, we will offer provision based on your child's needs. We can offer the following interventions when required:

- Individual OT assessments
- Classroom observations / support
- Consultation with parents, carers and staff
- One to one, group sessions and class based programmes
- Joint OT and Speech and Language therapy sessions
- Individualised school programmes to facilitate your child's development, which can also be used at home
- Recommendations and/or provision of specialist equipment such as seating, adapted cutlery or sensory equipment
- Teacher / staff training
- Parent training / work shops