

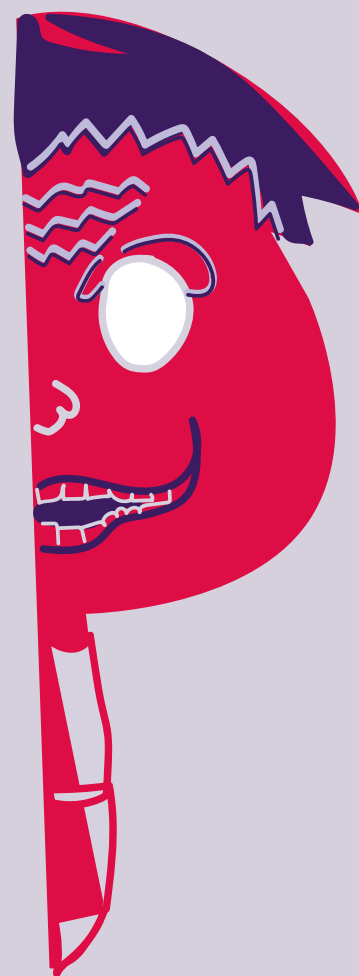
A children's human rights approach

Neurodivergent support needs in school

The following resource was co-produced with a family using their direct lived experience to highlight the importance of children's rights in education and the importance of being aware of wider issues in children's lives. The first part is a neurodivergent child's list of experiences while they were a nine year old young carer on a pathway to an autistic spectrum disorder diagnosis in primary school. The impact of these experiences meant that the child became so anxious at school that they were unable to attend and, some months later, is still on a phased return in a new school. The second part of this resource lists the things that the family said would have ensured the child's rights were respected.

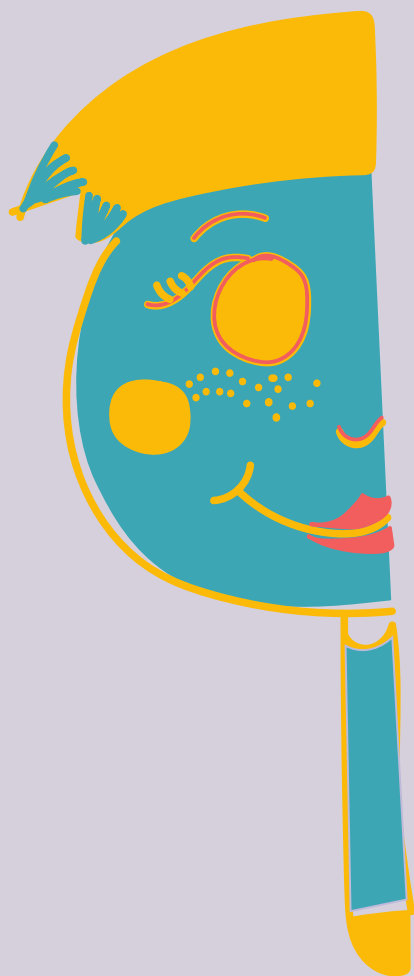
Bad practice:

- The head teacher didn't recognise the child as neurodivergent and failed to act on expert and medical advice to put appropriate supports and adaptations in place claiming that, as someone in education, she knew better.
- Once advocacy organisations got involved support was eventually put in place, but wider school staff were not informed of their diagnosis.
- The child was still continually put in situations they found overwhelming and then shouted at by their teacher when they had a diagnosed sensory issue.
- The child was then left without their learning support teacher when that member of staff was moved to a class teaching role.
- No one asked for the child's views or opinions on adaptations and they felt their feelings were ignored when they tried to tell staff what they needed.
- The child was regularly pointed at by the teacher who referred to them as "you" rather than using their name, which the child said made them feel "dehumanised".
- Although a time out space was eventually made available for the child when they felt overwhelmed, they would regularly find other people using the room and be told just to stand outside the classroom in the corridor.
- When the child told their teacher that they felt unloved and hated by other pupils who had labelled them the bad child the teacher did not speak to the other children.
- The child was temporarily excluded when they threw a shoe in retaliation to being hit by another child.



A children's human rights approach

Neurodivergent support needs in school



Good practice:

- Provide support at school and accept diagnoses without question.
- If a child becomes distressed give them time out so they can calm down.
- Be aware of possible other issues in a child's life.
- Listen to the child and build relationships.
- Give an overwhelmed child a chance to calm down and speak to them respectfully.
- Ask the child what is wrong and if you can help.
- Listen to parents/carers who know their children best.
- Ask permission to explain behaviour to class and foster support among pupils.
- Follow through on your promises and keep reviewing adaptations.
- Assign pupil support assistant to child for one-to-one support and prioritise individual needs.
- Autistic children need routine and notice to adapt to change.
- Be honest, straightforward and consistent.
- Ensure all staff know and understand the individual needs of the child and know what adaptations are required. Provide training if necessary.
- Never shout at a child. Treat them with respect.
- Use children's names and model kind behaviour to the class.
- Empathise! Put yourself in the child's shoes.