



Thriving Together: Parents and Schools Making Education Work for Autistic Children

This resource aims to inspire educators to adopt a flexible approach to good autism practice by sharing real stories of true collaboration between parents and schools.



"I am my son's voice and I will not be stopped until he gets what he needs."

"We have always worked in partnership towards a shared goal, for the best outcomes for my child."

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All imagery in this report is stock imagery, and not of beneficiaries.

Please note that this document contains stories that some readers might find distressing.

ABOUT THE AUTISM IN SCHOOLS PROJECT

According to the latest SEND statistics from the Department for Education, there are over 160,000 autistic pupils in schools across England. Over 70% of these pupils are in mainstream school, with the rest in specialist education, home-educated or out of education altogether. In 2021, the number of pupils with an EHC plan rose by 10% to 325,600 with the most common type of need among pupils with an EHC plan being autism, with 92,600 pupils (30% of all pupils).

However, autistic pupils are twice as likely to be suspended from school as pupils with no special educational needs (SEN) 1 .

In response to this, NHS England & London Region funded the Autism in Schools project following a successful pilot project in Northeast England. This project aims to enhance autistic children and young people's access to and experience of school.

The project is a collaborative partnership involving multiple organisations and groups, with significant involvement from autistic young people, their parents, carers, across local authorities in London. The project's steering group has representation from NHSE London, National Parent Carer Forum (NNPCF), Autism Education Trust (AET), as well as local authority and school representatives.

On behalf of the Autism in Schools Project, [Daisy Chain](#) has been commissioned to create this resource. Its purpose is to inspire educators to adopt a flexible approach to good autism practice by sharing real stories of authentic collaboration between parents and schools.



CONTEXT & LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Code of Practice in England is a legal document that provides guidance to educational institutions and local authorities on how to support children with special educational needs and disabilities, including autism. It emphasises the importance of early identification and collaboration and promotes person-centred planning and parent involvement.

However, despite its existence, the parents of autistic children frequently find themselves in conflict with their child's school, fighting for reasonable adjustments to ensure their children's educational needs are fully addressed.

A recent report, released in 2023 by the National Autistic Society, found that almost three quarters of parents believe that their child's school place does not fully meet their needs and that only 26% of autistic pupils feel happy in school.

This report presents a concerning picture, especially when we consider that without the proper support in place, autistic children may find themselves excluded from education altogether, leading to profound and enduring consequences for both them and their families.

Only
26%
of autistic pupils
feel happy in
school.



CONTEXT & LEGAL FRAMEWORK

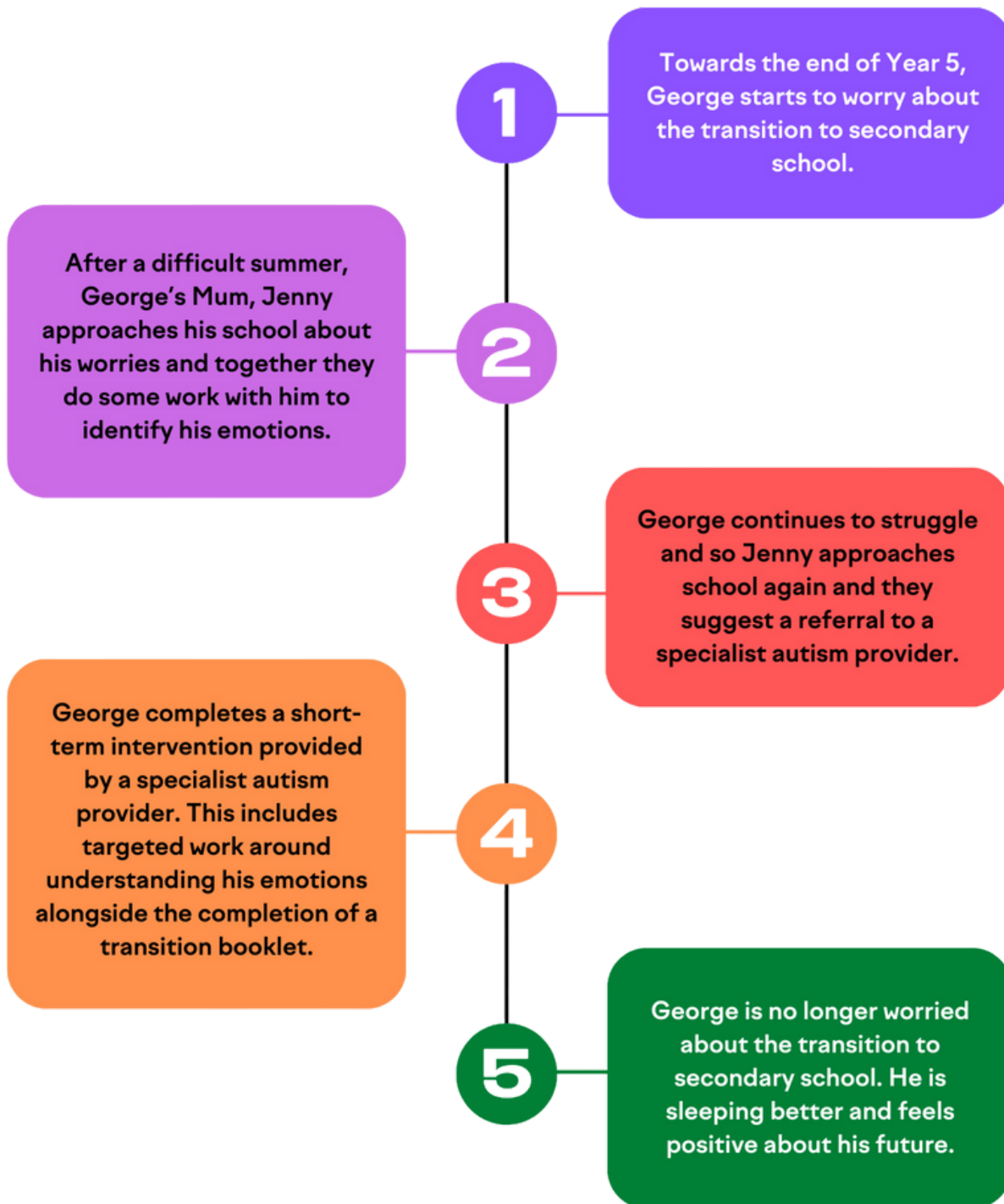
That being said, there are glimmers of hope with some schools recognising their legal responsibility to educate every child and collaborating with parents to implement the necessary reasonable adjustments as laid out in the AET's Principles of Good Autism Practice.

These principles complement the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice by offering specific guidance on best practice for supporting autistic individuals within that framework and include:

- Understanding the strengths, interests and challenges of the autistic child or young person.
- Enabling the voice of the autistic child or young person to contribute and influence decisions.
- Collaboration with parents and carers of autistic children and young people.
- Workforce development to support understanding.
- Leadership and management that promotes and embeds good autism practice.
- An ethos and environment that fosters social inclusion.
- Targeted support and measuring of progress.
- Adapting the curriculum to promote wellbeing and success.



GEORGE'S STORY - VISUAL TIMELINE



GEORGE'S STORY - VIDEO



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case study as a
video?**

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GEORGE'S STORY

George's story is a fantastic example of the positive impact that early identification and targeted support can have on the wellbeing of an autistic child or young person. George is an 11 year old boy who has just experienced a positive transition to a mainstream secondary school, made possible due to the supportive measures implemented during his last year in primary school.

George's Mum, Jenny, shares more about his story with us in her own words:

Can you describe to us when you first noticed that George was struggling in school?

George started struggling towards the end of Year 5 with knowing that Year 6 would be his last year at primary school. He was experiencing 'worries' but could not verbalise his feelings. He would often cry and not want to leave the house. George was also struggling to sleep and started to develop headaches. It was a really challenging time for George and us as a family. We didn't know what to do for the best but we knew he needed help.

When did you first express your concerns to George's school and how did they respond?

I approached school towards the end of Year 5 as I could see he was starting to struggle with the idea of leaving primary school and the transition to secondary school. It actually got worse over the summer holidays.

School and us as a family did some work around identifying his emotions in colours and we introduced 'worry time' and a 'worry worm' but he still seemed very low and I noticed he was losing interest in the things he usually enjoys. I accessed some parent led CBT (cognitive behaviour therapy) classes online which helped me, but I desperately wanted George to be given access to some support.



GEORGE'S STORY

I approached school about this towards the end of his first term in Year 6 and they suggested a referral to a specialist provider. School put in a referral and a six-week placement was agreed at a local autism charity whose specialist staff can provide bespoke 1:1 work around school-based anxiety and support with transitions.

What impact did this intervention have on George?

George is a happier boy since his sessions. He's more aware of his emotions and has been given the support he needed to process the fact that he will be leaving primary school soon.

During the sessions he was supported to understand his emotions and also completed a transition booklet which has been shared with his primary school and can be taken with him to secondary school. As part of this process George was able to communicate that he would like to visit his new school again and we were able to arrange this for him.

What, if anything, has George said to you about the impact the intervention has had on him?

George is no longer worried about changing schools, is sleeping better and seems more able to communicate how he is feeling. We have our George back again and it's so lovely to hear and see how happy he is. When I recently asked him about the worry jar he put together during one of the sessions, he said he is no longer feeling the need to use it as he doesn't have anything that worries him anymore. He also told me that he feels more happy than sad now because he understands his emotions and how they make him feel.



GEORGE'S STORY

How would you describe your relationship with George's school?

I have a good relationship with school, they are very approachable and genuinely care about George. I have always been very open and appreciate any feedback on how he's doing, including the challenges that he faces. We continue to work very closely together to achieve the best outcomes possible for George.

Do you have any advice for parents in a similar position to you?

I think as parents we do know what's best for our children and we should feel confident in that. I have doubted myself in the past as I felt professionals must know better, but my gut has always kept me right. If you feel your child needs support or is struggling, keep pushing. I am George's voice and will not stop until he gets what he needs. It's the hardest job I've ever undertaken but I wouldn't change a thing.

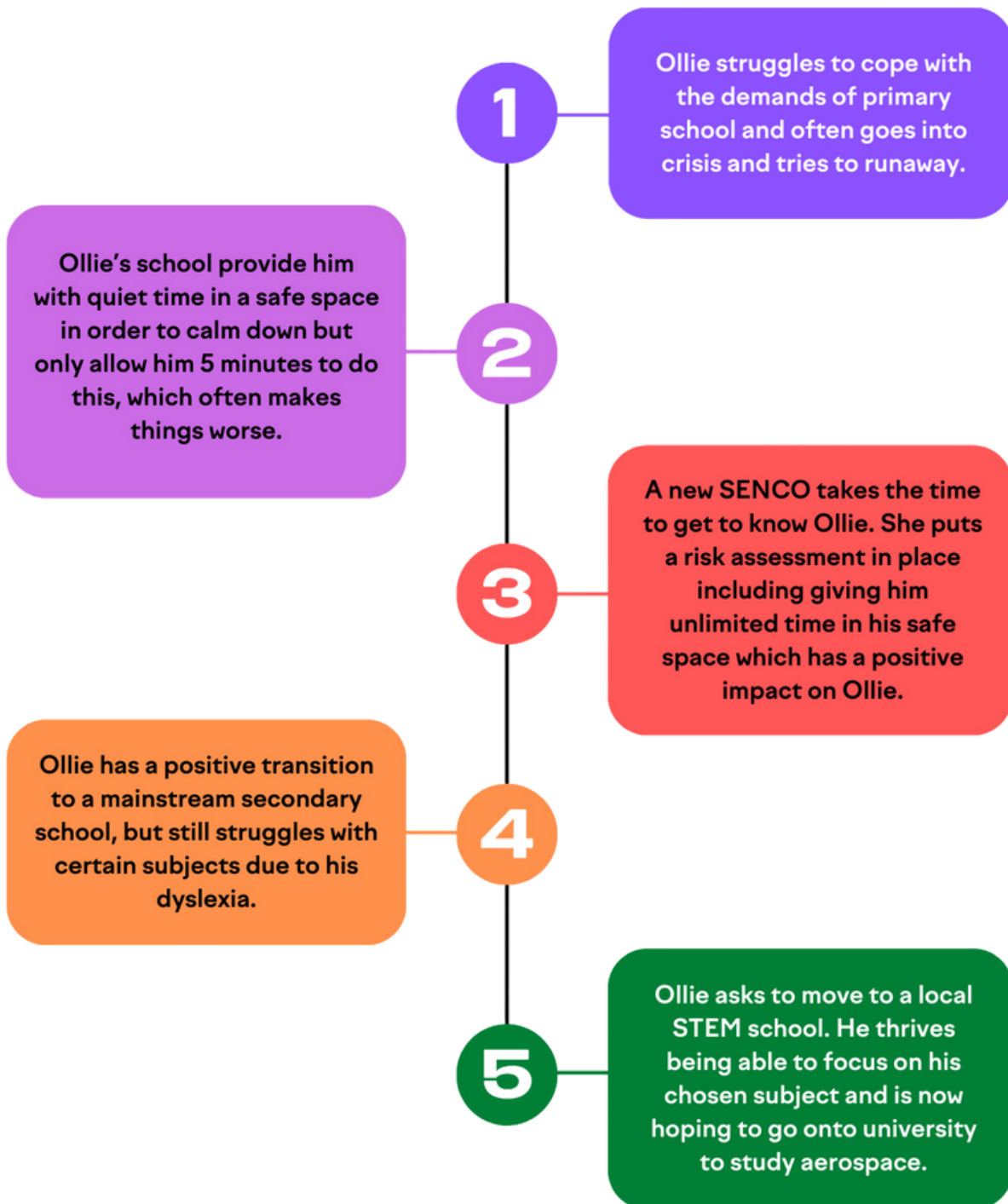
Reflection

George's story highlights the importance of providing support to autistic children and young people outside of the national curriculum, in order to ensure they develop the skills necessary to predict and manage change and regulate their emotions.

In this case, the school felt unable to provide this support in-house but were flexible in their approach and willing to work in partnership with George's mum to source the most appropriate support. This ensured that George was as prepared as possible for the difficult transition to secondary school which has now been a much more positive experience for him.



OLLIE'S STORY - VISUAL TIMELINE



OLLIE'S STORY - VIDEO



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OLLIE'S STORY



In our next story we hear from Sarah, the Mum of a 17 year autistic young man named Ollie who is currently working towards his A Levels at a mainstream secondary school before planning to go on to university to study Aerospace. However, according to Sarah, this would not have been possible without his differences being identified at primary school and appropriate support and reasonable adjustments being put in place.

Sarah spoke to us directly about what she remembers about this time:

What do you remember about Ollie's time in primary school?

Ollie found primary school quite tricky from the get-go. He was amazing at maths and had a brilliant memory and a wicked sense of humour, but he is also dyslexic and struggled with direct questions and liked to understand why things were happening which often caused problems. Things escalated in Year 1, when the reading and phonics got harder.

Ollie was having repeated meltdowns at school during this time which were often made worse by the fact that when he had a meltdown the school would use a timer and say 'you have five minutes to calm down and then you have to go back to your lessons'. But, of course, he often wasn't able to calm down in this time which just made things worse.

OLLIE'S STORY

What was the school's reaction to this? Did they put anything in place to support him?

Yes, they were helpful. They tried things like a wobble cushion and breaking tasks down into smaller chunks, which really seemed to help him. But the biggest change happened when they hired a new SENCO, who had her own children with additional needs and really understood autism. She allowed Ollie to take as much time as he needed to calm down.

I think the first time it was a good hour, then the second time it was forty-five minutes and then the next time it was only fifteen minutes. Just knowing he could go to a safe space whenever he needed and for as long as he needed was all it took for the meltdowns to stop.

Are there any other reasonable adjustments they made for him?

They got everyone to work to the same set of rules, so for example, everyone knew where his safe space was, and how to get him there and everyone followed the same process of allowing him to take the time he needed to regulate. So, the school felt much safer to him. All it took really was simple adjustments like that to make it possible for him to do well and thrive.



OLLIE'S STORY

How was Ollie's transition to secondary school?

With support from his primary school, Ollie transitioned extremely well into a mainstream secondary school, despite the school's reservations about being able to meet his needs, and the school was delighted with how he settled in. Ollie enjoyed transitioning from classroom to classroom and having more specialist teachers for each subject.

Ollie's dyslexia continued to cause him a lot of frustration, however, particularly in the subjects he found most difficult at primary school such as French, Music and Drama. In Year 9, Ollie asked to move to the local STEM school, where there was no compulsory language, music or drama. This suited him and he has thrived with being able to focus on his chosen subjects.

How is Ollie doing now?

Ollie is doing amazingly well. He is currently studying for his A Levels and we hope he will go onto University. I think he is planning to study aerospace. He takes a lot of responsibility now and he works part-time at a local coffee shop where he is a valued member of the team. He has turned into a very lovely young man and I am very proud of him.

Reflection

As part of their Good Autism Practice guidelines the AET stresses the importance of parents and schools working together to achieve the best outcomes for the child.

They also emphasise the importance of adopting a flexible educational approach that takes into account the individual strengths, challenges and needs of the autistic child or young person. This could include adjusting the timetable or considering where the child or young person sits in class or reducing social demands. In Ollie's case something as simple as providing a designated, quiet space made a huge difference to his experiences in school.

The headteacher of Ollie's primary school spoke to us about why she feels this was so important:

We are a very inclusive school and it's important that we work with families and children to put a package together that meets their needs.

I remember Ollie coming into Reception and being really engaged in playing outside in the garden.

(continued)

OLLIE'S STORY

We noticed straight away he liked climbing and he liked running but he was also very interested in learning about the world as well. I also remember that Ollie found it difficult to be in class and would often run out of class to go to his safe spaces. If you could not find Ollie, you needed to look up or find the smallest possible space in the classroom because that is where Ollie would be. When we considered reasonable adjustments for Ollie, we really had to take a child-centred approach and ensure we watched and listened to Ollie.

Ollie very kindly shared with us his own thoughts about his future which he hopes might be useful to other autistic children and young people reading his story:

What are your hopes for the future Ollie?

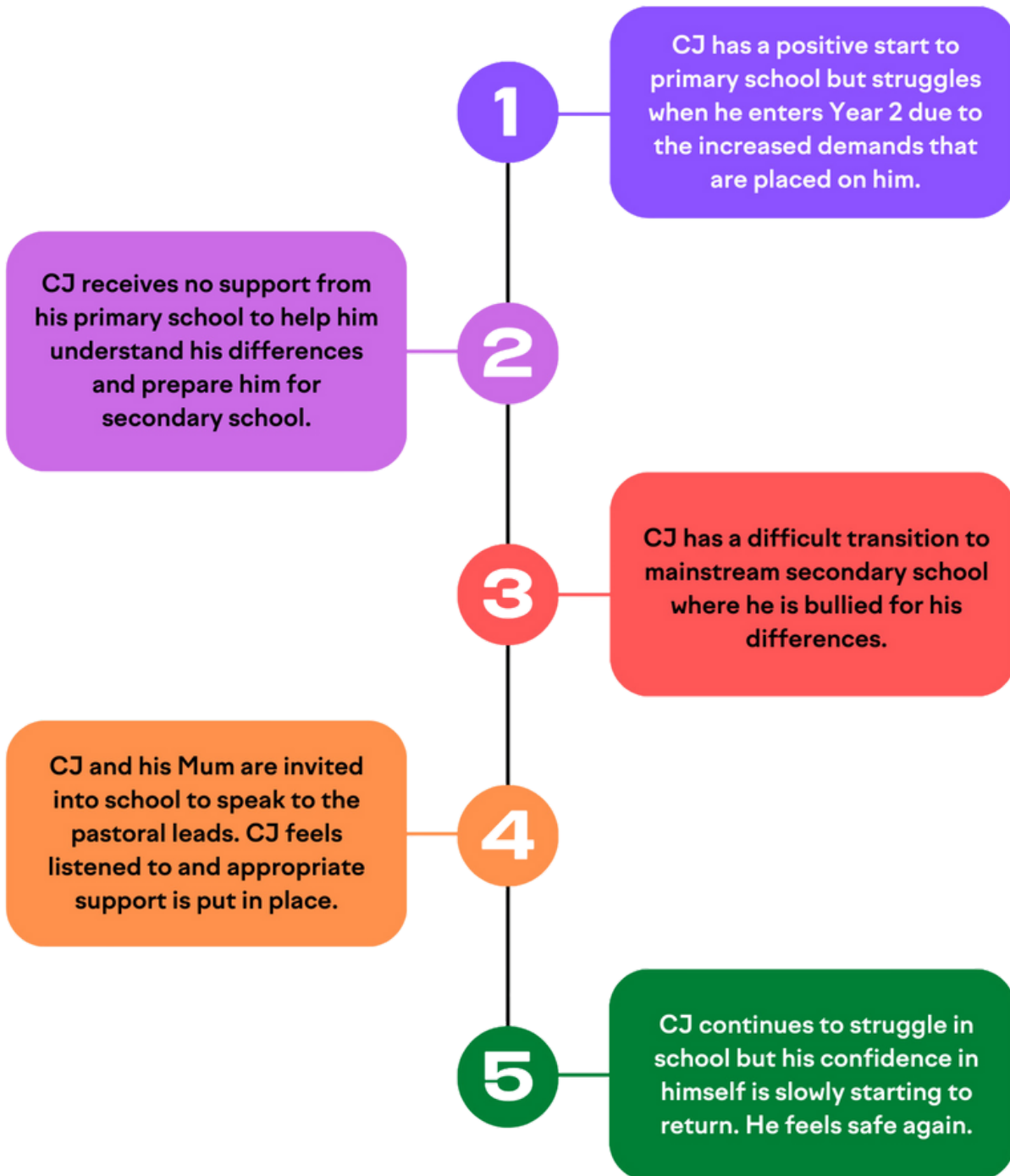
I would love to work in aerospace engineering. I am going to hopefully do that at university and then make a career out of it.

What would you like to say to other young people in a similar situation to you?

It does get better. Believe it or not, it does get easier as you get older. It's also important to tell people what's going on because then they will be able to help you.



CJ'S STORY - VISUAL TIMELINE



CJ'S STORY - VIDEO



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CJ'S STORY

In the first two stories we have heard from the parents of autistic young people who were given the right support in primary school and have seen the positive impact that this has had, not just on their transition to secondary school, but experience of education in general. However, in this next story, we hear from the parent of a 13 year old autistic young man called CJ, whose primary school failed to properly support him which resulted in him having a difficult transition to secondary school where he was initially bullied because of his differences.

CJ's mum, Natasha, spoke to us about what happened.

What do you remember about CJ's time in primary school, and his transition to secondary school?

CJ enjoyed his early years in primary school but will always say that Year 2 was when it started to go wrong because that was when he was made to sit still. Before then he had the freedom to move and was given choice in what he was learning which really suited him. He has always been happy so long as he is able to follow his interests. We did not have a good relationship with CJ's primary school. We had to fight to get an EHCP and we had no support getting a diagnosis or with the transition to secondary school.

CJ transitioned to secondary school during the pandemic and from the start he found secondary school very difficult. He was bullied for his differences, but in a very subtle way, so that it was difficult for others to spot what was going on.



CJ'S STORY

When CJ's school did become aware of the bullying did they put anything in place to support him?

The person who runs the resource base for autistic students that they have at his school, invited CJ and I to come in and speak to the two pastoral leads at the school about the bullying that had been happening. As CJ spoke, I felt the air in the room change and from that moment onwards I never felt like we had to fight for support again. Because he found it difficult to articulate what was happening, we weren't always clear what was going on and so they provided him with a learning support assistant who did a fantastic job making him feel safe again and gave him 1:1 support throughout the day.

The pastoral team was also on hand to support at more unstructured times of the day. I can also always shoot off an email to the team and say he did not sleep well last night and was very anxious this morning. I can then tell him that she has confirmed he can pop up to the resource base if he wants to and you can see his shoulders relax.

What changes have you seen in CJ since this support has been put in place?

CJ is still suffering, I think from PTSD after such an extended period of time where he felt unsafe. He is quite anxious, and we have days when he says he does not want to go to school but he is always fine once he is there.

I am seeing his confidence slowly come back as he starts to feel safe again.

How would you describe your relationship with CJ's school?

My relationship with the school is very good and I do not think there's anything we would change.

What are your hopes for CJ's future?

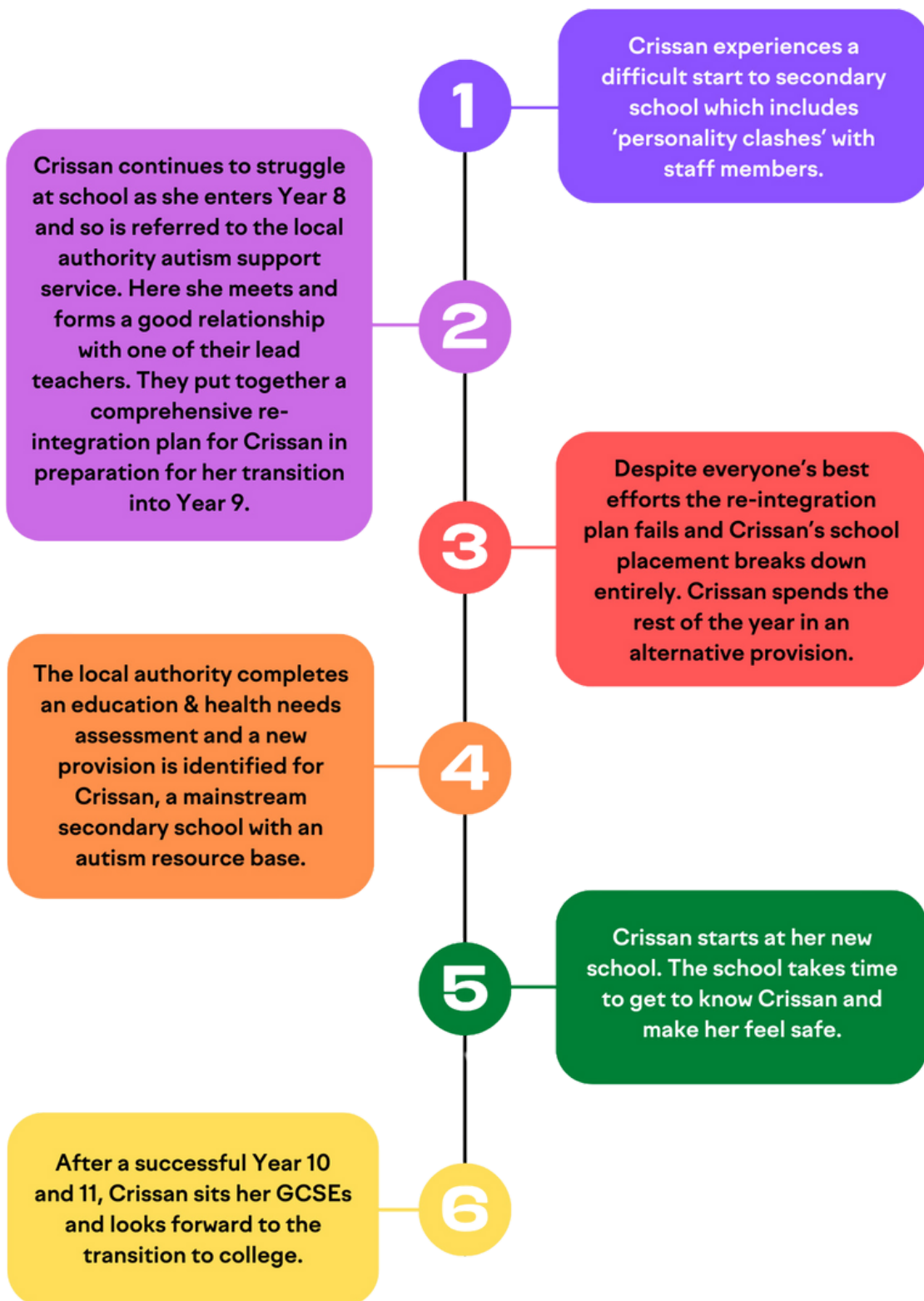
My hopes for CJ'S future are very realistic, I want him to be happy, I want him to contribute to the world, I want him to make use of his quirky sense of humour and his musicality and his amazing skills with anything mathematical. I say to him the whole world is there for you and I know you will shine.

Reflection

As part of their Good Autism Practice guidelines the AET encourages all settings to provide opportunities for children and young people to have their voice heard and to express their thoughts, feelings and ideas in a way that is accessible to them.

This has been found to be essential in helping individuals gain belief in their own capabilities and develop the knowledge and skills needed to make healthy choices and develop their independence. Giving CJ the opportunity to talk to key staff about the bullying he was experiencing allowed him to be part of the solution, which translated into helping make him feel safe at school again.

CRISSAN'S STORY - VISUAL TIMELINE



CRISSAN'S STORY - VIDEO



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CRISSAN'S STORY

In this next story we hear from Crissan, a 15 year old autistic young woman who at the time we spoke to her had just finished sitting her GCSEs at a mainstream secondary school and was looking forward to the transition to college. However, a few years ago things were very different for Crissan who was struggling to accept her diagnosis and disengaged from education entirely due to a lack of support from her school at the time.

Crissan was keen to speak to us directly about her experiences and shared the following with us:

Can you start by telling us a bit about your experiences at your previous school?

I never really had staff who engaged with me or interacted with me, they used to place a lot of sanctions on me and they used to exclude me and make me stay at home. I remember this experience I had in Year 7, where a teacher shouted at me and I was scared. I told my mum about it and my mum told the school and they just didn't pay attention to the situation and left it unresolved. I did not have any support at that school.

And what about the school you are at now?

They built connections with me, so I felt like I was able to express myself and they tried to do things at my pace.

They taught me how to understand other people's perspectives and how they feel, which has helped me get along with other people more as I can see their side of the story. I have learning support teachers who come to lessons with me and support me. In this school, they have a lot of alternatives for people like me who struggle.

They have this place called the resource base for autistic students and they help a lot of people.

What do you enjoy most about your current school?

I enjoy making connections with the teachers. I enjoy being able to express myself and being listened to by adults because I never got that before. When I moved schools, I realised how people do want to help me and make me feel happy. I am very thankful for the experience I have had here and feel positive about going into college.



CRISSAN'S STORY

Crissan asked the lead teacher who works with her as part of the local authority autism support service, to share with us her thoughts as to why her previous school placement broke down:

I don't think that Crissan's needs were really understood by the school and I think she really suffered from a lack of understanding around what her strengths were and also perhaps what her needs were and how she'd like to be supported. When Crissan moved schools it was still challenging at the beginning because Crissan didn't see herself as someone who had additional needs and couldn't see her own strengths. She was very angry and had great difficulty trusting the people around her.

She was really scared about starting in a new provision and whether it would work and what would happen if it didn't. She had tremendous anxiety about other students and what they would know about her and think about her.

It's a very difficult year to go into school at Year 10. I think what was most extraordinary was that the school really took time to understand what she needed in order to feel safe. Most significantly, staff were always ready to listen to her perspective and because of that establishment of trust were able to offer her an alternative perspective which allowed her to see not only how she was feeling but how other people were feeling too.



CRISSAN'S STORY

Reflection

Crissan's story really highlights the importance of the AET's Good Autism Practice principle five which encourages school leaders to create an inclusive educational environment through changing attitudes and behaviours towards children and young people with SEND, including autistic children and young people.

In her previous school, leaders did not encourage staff to try and understand the underlying reasons behind her behaviours which led to Crissan becoming angrier and losing trust in the people around her. However, at her new school the leaders of the resource base encouraged staff across the school to take the time to understand what she needed in order to feel safe which allowed her to establish the trust she needed to access her education and thrive.

Before she left us we asked the lead teacher from the local authority how she felt Crissan was doing now and this is what she told us:

Oh, she's doing brilliantly. She's just finished her GCSEs and is a confident, strong eloquent young woman. She has a wonderful appreciation for the staff who've supported her in the last two years and she also has empathy for the other students in the resource base, which is so moving especially because she has spent a lot of time

denying her own diagnosis and has been really troubled by it and found it a really difficult thing to accept and understand. She has no difficulty in understanding AND accepting the other students and shows them kindness and empathy and understanding, so she'll be a great loss to the school actually when she leaves. I think they will all be devastated.

Crissan also shared some final thoughts with us when we spoke to her, which she has asked that we include here for other autistic young people to read:

What have you achieved that you are proud of and what are your hopes for the future?

That I was able to sit my GCSEs. I never thought I was going to be able to make it into Year 11 and do my GCSEs but I was actually able to sit them. My hopes for the future are that I can enjoy sixth form and be able to continue my education after that.

Would you like to say to other young people in a similar situation to you?

I would say never give up and remember that if I can do it, you can do it as well.

MILLIE'S STORY - VISUAL TIMELINE



MILLIE'S STORY - VIDEO



This story contains
information which some
readers may find distressing.



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MILLIE'S STORY

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Each of the stories we have seen so far has presented a different example of a mainstream school putting reasonable adjustments in place which have allowed a child or young person to thrive.

However, in our final story we hear from the parent of Millie, a 14 year old autistic young woman who currently attends an alternative education provision after it was identified that it was the mainstream school environment itself which was not conducive to her wellbeing. Millie, enjoyed primary school but struggled with the transition to secondary school which, towards the end of year 7, started to have a serious impact on her mental health.

Millie's Mum, Victoria, has shared more about Millie's story with us in her own words:

When would you say you first noticed that Millie was struggling in school?

My concerns started when Millie transitioned to secondary school. Due to Millie's masking, the outward signs of her struggle were difficult to see at first but gained rapid momentum as the pressures of attending a mainstream secondary school increased. The first sign I noticed was a reluctance to go to sleep and remain asleep throughout the night. She became unsettled at home and displayed agitated behaviours such as ripping clothing and other people's belongings.

Millie became very withdrawn and stopped participating in activities that she previously enjoyed, such as baking and arts and crafts. School mornings became increasingly difficult.

Her reluctance to attend would result in heightened behaviour, crying, screaming and then a frantic and chaotic exit from home to school, where she would be met at the car and guided into the building. We faced a battle every single day, the amount of energy Millie put into getting herself ready to leave for school drained her. I dreaded the mornings and I knew she did too. We carried on like this for months and Millie's mental health took a rapid decline. Millie first self-harmed in April 2021 and from then onwards self-harm became a regular occurrence.



MILLIE'S STORY

Did Millie's school put anything in place to support Millie?

Millie was heavily supported in school by her Learning Manager and was given reasonable adjustments, like a pass to leave lessons that she was able to use at any point during the day. My concerns were never dismissed and were always taken seriously. Regular discussions took place with her Learning Manager at the end of the school day to check in and monitor her progress, however despite all this, Millie's attendance continued to decline as she struggled to adjust to this new environment. Millie seemed to be in a constant state of stress. She was overwhelmed by the volume of people in the building, the high noise level, the bright lighting, the odours in the dining hall, the students in the corridors and in classrooms.

The building felt clinical and she struggled to navigate the layout. Millie refused to eat or drink in school and would often come home tired and hungry. Millie's sense of self-worth was at an all-time low and as she became increasingly overwhelmed she completely shut down.

What happened next?

In March 2022 Millie made a serious attempt on her life, resulting in a hospital admission. We had hit rock bottom. We received support via Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and followed a rigid safety plan at home.

Millie was socially isolated, would not leave her bedroom or communicate with others and was unable to be left unsupervised at any time. The safety measures in place had a further negative impact on her mental health. She was frustrated that these measures had to be followed as she had no independence and limited privacy. I was on high alert and Millie knew it. Our home was not the relaxed space it once was, there was a tense feel to it as I rigidly followed the safety plan, which did not support Millie's mental health needs, but kept her physically safe.

The months that followed were a blur, an interim review was held in July and extensive changes to her plan were made and submitted. The summer holidays came and went and the next academic year rolled around. Despite all the adjustments made by the school and the external support put in place by CAHMS, things remained unchanged. She managed to go back to school sporadically over a couple of weeks then we slipped back into old patterns.

By the end of that term, I made the decision that in order to protect her mental health she would not be returning to school. This decision was not one I took lightly. We had been trialling multiple strategies and interventions for more than two academic years to no avail and I felt the root of the problem was the school environment itself, which was the one thing the school was unable to change.

MILLIE'S STORY

Was the school supportive of this decision and did they put anything in place to ensure Millie was still able to access an education during this time?

The school understood the reasons behind my decision and continued to support us as a family. Regular check-ins via email were put in place and it was agreed that the school environment was not conducive to her wellbeing.

A dynamic approach to her education was taken and a TA from the school now tutors Millie 1:1 for 6 hours a week at a local specialist autism provision based on a farm. Millie's time at the farm is calm and ordered and she is consistently prepared for change through social stories and visual aids. Alongside her tutoring, she is provided with 1:1 and small group support that focuses on managing her anxiety and developing coping skills and independent living skills, which is provided by highly trained staff.

She also thrives being around her neurodivergent peers. Millie looks forward to her sessions and has positive engagement with 1:1 tutoring and is producing a high-quality of work. Her attendance is high and she has started to plan for the future and will now talk about what job/college course she might like to do.

How is Millie's mental health now?

Removing Millie from the mainstream school environment but ensuring she remains supported by school has resulted in Millie feeling safe and in a regulated emotional state. Millie is slowly beginning to recognise her own needs, and her risk-taking behaviours have reduced to the point that she is now able to access our local area independently.

Millie is also able to have unsupervised periods at home and is engaging in her chosen interests again such as arts and crafts, baking and cooking. Millie has a better self-image and sense of worth.



MILLIE'S STORY

Reflection

Millie's story serves as an excellent example of a school collaborating closely with a family to achieve the best outcomes for a student. It also illustrates the importance of educational settings carefully assessing the accessibility of the learning environment, considering potential physical barriers, sensory processing challenges, and the social dynamics involved in peer interactions. Initially, after implementing reasonable adjustments that had minimal impact, the school came to a profound realisation.

It wasn't merely the adaptations that were needed; it was the mainstream school environment itself that proved incompatible with Millie's learning style. Nevertheless, the school remained steadfast in their commitment to providing an education and demonstrated remarkable flexibility in their approach. This dedication ensured that Millie could now access her education without experiencing any adverse effects on her mental well-being.

Victoria left us with some final thoughts about her relationship with Millie's school and why the partnership they have has been so important in improving Millie's health and well-being.

"We have always had a strong relationship, where both parties involved are seen, heard and respected. I have always felt that school have Millie's best interests at heart and that they take into consideration her overall wellbeing and understand that her mental health needs must be addressed first. We have always worked in partnership towards a shared goal, the best outcome for Millie."



CONCLUSION

Despite the guidelines and principles outlined in the SEND Code of Practice there remains a significant gap between the ideal and the reality of educational experiences for many autistic children. The findings of the 2023 report by the National Autistic Society are disheartening, as they reveal that the majority of parents feel that their child's school falls short in meeting their unique needs and the consequences of this educational gap are profound, potentially leading to exclusion from the learning environment.

Nevertheless, amidst these challenges, there are beacons of hope. Some schools have recognised their legal and moral obligation to provide inclusive education and have actively engaged with parents to implement necessary adjustments. AET's Principles of Good Autism Practice play a pivotal role in complementing the SEND Code of Practice by offering clear guidance on effective strategies for supporting autistic individuals within the framework of inclusive education.

These principles encompass understanding the strengths, voices, and needs of autistic individuals, fostering collaboration between educators and parents, developing a skilled workforce, promoting leadership that embeds autism-friendly practices, creating inclusive environments, and measuring progress through targeted support and adapted curricula.

The stories shared in this resource serve as inspiring examples of how good autism practice can make a profound difference in the lives of autistic children and their families.


By shining a light on these stories, we hope to encourage and motivate educational professionals to adopt a flexible and inclusive approach, ultimately creating a more equitable and supportive learning environment for all children, regardless of their unique needs. It is through such collective efforts that we can bridge the gap between policy and practice and ensure that every autistic child receives the education they deserve.

References

- [National Autistic Society Education Report, 2023](#)
- [SEND Code of Practice](#)
- [AET Good Autism Practice Report](#)

TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS

Working in partnership with your child's school is crucial to ensure they receive the right reasonable adjustments and support. Here are some top tips for parents of autistic children:

-  **Open and Ongoing Communication:**
Establish open lines of communication with your child's teacher, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), and school administration. Regularly check in to discuss your child's progress, challenges, and adjustments.
-  **Develop a Positive Relationship:**
Build a collaborative and positive relationship with school staff. Approach discussions with an attitude of partnership and a shared goal of your child's success.
-  **Know Your Child's Rights:**
Understand your child's legal rights under the SEND Code of Practice and other relevant laws. This knowledge will empower you to advocate effectively for your child.
-  **Document Everything:**
Keep records of all communication with the school, including emails, meetings, and phone calls. Document your child's progress and any issues that arise.
-  **Collaborative Goal Setting:**
Collaboratively set goals for your child's education with the school team. Ensure these goals are specific, measurable, and tailored to your child's needs.
-  **Request Regular Updates:**
Request regular updates on your child's progress and any adjustments made in the classroom. Stay informed about their academic and social development.
-  **Attend School Meetings:**
Participate in meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and other school gatherings. Your input is valuable in making decisions about your child's education.
-  **Advocate for Accommodations:**
Advocate for the reasonable accommodations and modifications your child needs. These may include extended time on assignments, sensory breaks, or specialised teaching methods.

TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS



Promote Development of Relationships with Peers:

Work with the school to implement support around social skills that works for your child, helping them build meaningful relationships with classmates.



Support at Home:

Continue your child's learning at home. Collaborate with the school to reinforce strategies used in the classroom.



Celebrate Achievements:

Acknowledge and celebrate your child's achievements, both big and small. Positive reinforcement can boost their self-esteem and motivation.



Seek Support Networks:

Connect with local or online support groups for parents of autistic children. These networks can provide valuable advice and emotional support. To access peer support and education in your area visit www.autismcentral.org to connect with your local support hub.

