



School From Our Perspective

by Autistic Teenagers

The aim of this document is to **help you understand** the challenges us, **Autistic teenagers**, experience at school and how you can **support us**.

Four Sources of the Biggest Challenges



School Environment



Uniforms & Clothing



Classrooms



Social Dynamics



Sensory Nightmare



- **school corridors** noise, lights, crowds cause overwhelm
- **scratchy clothing** tight collars, sock seams feel like needles, itchy tags cause issues with concentration, emotional pain and distress
- we feel like we are **drowning in pain and expectations**



Transitions and Changes in the Routine



- **going from one class to another** can be very stressful especially with no warning
- **having exams, sub teachers, different classrooms** can cause a meltdown or shutdown



Exhaustion and Judgment



- **masking**: pretending to be somebody else, copying others, hiding real reactions to fit or blend in is exhausting
- **double classes, noisy environments, constant social pressure** drain us
- **asking for help is difficult** when we have been misunderstood or dismissed in the past

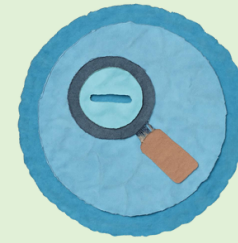


IT IS NOT ABOUT AVOIDING SCHOOL. IT IS ABOUT SURVIVING IN A WAY THAT'S HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE.

Support That Helps



allowing wearing noise cancelling headphones and using fidgets



setting up smaller groups or 1:1 support



allowing wearing sensory-friendly clothing like soft jumpers or tag-free shirts



having supportive adult check ins just once or twice a day



planning shorter days or scheduled sensory breaks



providing access to a quiet space when we feel overwhelmed



making space and allowing us to be ourselves



being told and warned ahead of time about fire drills



having a visual schedule showing what's happening that day



letting us choose how we work, like using a laptop instead of writing



SUPPORT WORKS BEST WHEN IT'S CONSISTENT, RESPECTFUL, AND BASED ON REAL COMMUNICATION, NOT ASSUMPTIONS.

This document was made based on the video made by young Autistic people in a psychology group run by Enable Ireland. We thank the young people for their ideas and hard work.

