



# Reasonable Adjustments in School That Have Worked for Children, Young People and Their Families

#### **INTRODUCTION**

BURY2GETHER, Bury's Parent Carer Forum for parents/carers of children and young people (age 0-25) with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), were asked by Bury's Community Education Psychology Team to look at sharing information between parents/carers on supporting their children. In discussion with the Community Education Psychology Team, BURY2GETHER suggested trying to gather information from parents/carers on what had worked well for families when reasonable adjustments were put in place to accommodate a child's needs.

The following report looks at the results of a survey that BURY2GETHER sent its members in the summer of 2025 asking for "Just One Thing" that a school had done to support a child that had made a difference.

#### **METHOD**

BURY2GETHER sent a questionnaire to all its members to ask:

- 1. What difficulty their child had experienced at school;
- 2. How this difficulty affected their child at school and/or home;
- 3. What reasonable adjustment school had put in place support their child; and
- 4. What difference that adjustment had made to their child at school and/or home.

Parents/carers were also allowed to provide any general comments. Parents/carers could complete the form more than once if they wanted to provide more examples.

#### **RESULTS**

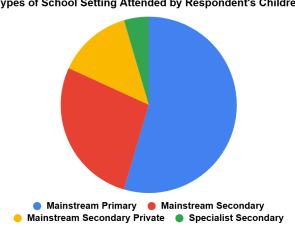
BURY2GETHER has 1500 members - although not all will be active in reading or responding to emails or posts on the private Facebook group for members. We understand that for many parents of children with SEND, school can be very challenging and not all parents/carers or their children have good experiences, so not all parents/carers would want or be able to respond. We also understand not all parents/carers want to or have the time to engage in surveys, particularly if they feel that in the past they have completed surveys in Bury for the Local Authority and not seen a difference.

BURY2GETHER received 23 responses to the survey. Of these responses, 21 detailed positive actions taken by schools that had resulted in improvements to a child's well-being whilst 1 response discussed alternative provision that had been provided. In addition, 1 response detailed negative experiences at school that had not been resolved. Although the aim of the survey was to capture positive adjustments that could be repeated in other schools, this response was recorded as it provided contrast to when adjustments were not made for SEND.

Appendix 1 gives the full responses from parents/carers. For full anonymity, "son/daughter" has been altered to "my child" in any response.

#### 1. Type of School Attended

Of the 23 respondents, 12 had a child in mainstream primary school, 6 had a child in mainstream secondary school, 3 had a child in a specialist secondary school and 2 had a child in a private mainstream secondary school. Within this group, one child had now left school and was receiving an Education Other Than at School (EOTAS).



Types of School Setting Attended by Respondent's Children

#### 2. **SEND Description**

Parents/carers were asked to describe the type of SEND of their child. The majority of respondents' children were autistic (19). Parents/carers could list more than one SEND description. Only one child was not described as neurodivergent (either autism or ADHD). Respondents reported a high frequency of children (12) with Sensory Processing Disorder or sensory difficulties. Across the respondents, all of the children were either autistic or had ADHD or Sensory Processing Disorder/sensory difficulties (or any combination of these).

SEND Description (More than one Could Be Recorded)	Number of Children
Autism	18
Sensory Processing Disorder/Sensory Difficulties	12
ADHD	9
Anxiety/Mental Health Difficulties	6
Learning Difficulties/Learning Disability	4
Genetic Condition	2
Dyslexia	1
Epilepsy	1
Chronic Fatigue	1
Dyspraxia	1
Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)	1

Global Developmental Delay	1
Emotional-Based School Avoidance (EBSA)	1

### 3. Difficulties Experienced at School

All responses are listed in Appendix 1. Summarised below are the common themes that emerged.

#### i Uniform

There were 11 respondents who listed uniform and sensory issues to clothing as a difficulty for their child. This could result in difficulties at home in the morning getting dressed which caused real distress to the child. When a school made reasonable adjustments to school uniform, it could make a big difference to getting ready for school and being regulated in the day. Some examples are given below:

**Difficulty:** "An uncomfortable uniform just added to the morning distress. My child was upset, angry, preoccupied with the feel of uniform."

**Adjustment Made:** "My child wears the correct school colours, but in the most comfortable way. Grey sweat shorts (all year), a round-necked t-shirt (they find collars very uncomfortable) and a round-necked sweatshirt. They rarely wear long trousers, but school agree to grey/black joggers if my child wants."

**Difference:** "It helps immensely as one less battle in a morning and less of a distraction during the day from uncomfortable collars, waistbands, etc."

**Difficulty:** "Uncomfortable, dysregulated in blazer. Arguments about a blazer in the mornings, detentions, removals from lessons, meltdowns."

Adjustment Made: "School agreed my child did not have to wear it."

**Difference:** "HUGE difference. Argument over it every morning gone, less stressed. This was crazy, it's such a simple adjustment but was causing so much stress. The detentions were causing a fear of school, arguments with teachers were frequent, tears. It was easier to get a laptop approved than a simple clothing adjustment that made a world of difference to my child's ability to attend."

**Difficulty:** "Wearing a blazer - sensory issues. Arguments about putting it in their bag in the morning, missed learning due to being removed from lessons, detentions, sanctions."

**Adjustment Made:** "No blazer. The majority of teachers no longer seem to comment on the lack of blazer."

**Difference:** "No arguments in the morning, more engaged in class, [no] missed learning because of uniform policy. Uniform is such a huge issue for my autistic child - they have so many barriers to learning already that clothing should be easily solvable! It also costs the school nothing."

Whilst we asked just for positive examples of school adjustments, in contrast one parent/carer explained what had not happened at their child's school regarding uniform:

**Difficulty:** "Sensory issues with uniform. Extremely distressed and triggered by teachers who don't read EHCPs and think all children with sensory issues are the same."

**Adjustment made:** "Nothing. The school insisted on a uniform that was overpriced (only available to purchase at one outlet) and uncomfortable. My child wore falling-apart shoes [because they could not bear to wear new ones] as they were so sensory and even though I bought multiple alternatives, and some identical to the falling-apart ones, my child couldn't cope. The school wanted me to send my child in with shoes to try in the day for short periods and when my child refused they wanted to send someone from school to collect the shoes."

**Difference:** "My child absolutely hated school and couldn't cope. It was supposed to be a SEN school, too. Schools are obsessed with uniform, I was a co-opted governor at a high school that took uniform rules to the extreme. I stressed the uniform was not inclusive in any way, shape or form. Schools have a very backwards approach to uniform and many governors are men in their 60s, 70s with very different thoughts about schoolchildren and the world of work. I was horrified at some of the challenges my child had at their SEN school and feel sorry for children who don't have a voice and can't explain to their parents what is happening."

### ii Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) and School Distress

Some parents/carers reported difficulty in attending due to EBSA or severe distress around school. Examples of adjustments made to help with this include:

Difficulty: "EBSA. Distressed about school."

**Adjustment Made:** "Many adjustments made to be honest, but a good one was a part-time timetable. Also, entering school 5 mins later after school started via school reception to avoid crowds/busy time and leaving 5 minutes earlier, (me collecting them from the school reception)."

**Difference:** "My child likes that it is less crowded as they get overwhelmed around too many people."

**Difficulty:** "Struggling to go into school in the morning. Distress every day, severe anxiety at separating at the school gate, unable to eat before school, vomiting, etc."

**Adjustment Made:** "A friend met my child at the gate with a small bean bag and a big sand timer. They both went on to the playground where there were no other children, supervised by a teaching assistant and played catch for 5/10 mins."

**Difference:** "It seemed like a simple idea, but it made an instant improvement on the morning anxiety. It was fun and competitive. This intervention was unfortunately removed after approximately 6 months and the distress returned. But, it had been very effective."

## iii. Being Organised for School

Some parents discussed difficulties for their child coping with being independent to organise themselves at school, and the adjustments that were made: Some children with SEND can find executive functioning skills more difficult than their non-SEND peers.

**Difficulty:** "My 5-year-old struggles to organise their belongings at the end of the day. They often get distracted and are impulsive. They would get distracted by other things. They would lose or misplace items easily."

**Adjustment Made:** "School put a chart together to remind my child what they need to do at the end of the day. They would give gentle reminders and prompts to keep my child on track."

**Difference:** "My child loses their items less and are a little more organised with their belongings and themselves."

**Difficulty:** "They were getting into trouble for being late to lessons. They missed the bell or got distracted and so were often a couple of minutes late to class. Detentions, crying, real feeling of dread when they realised they were a minute late because they said they just can't help it and were not able to just apologise and get on with the lesson. They would then be dysregulated when told off and often removed from the lesson."

**Adjustment Made:** "A teacher told me they had worked out a system with my child, where my child would come in and explain the reasons they were late and apologise (a little bit like you would in the adult world!). My child was then allowed to get on with the lesson."

**Difference:** The lateness decreased - I think my child was less stressed and more able to use their executive functioning skills when they were not so scared of being told off. Less stressed at the end of the day, more engaged, less missed learning. It might look like this would be an unfair adjustment for my child, but removing the sanctions that were so deregulating for them allowed them to develop the skills to manage their time, created a calmer classroom, and also taught my child communication skills."

#### iv Writing

Some parents discussed how writing can be an issue for a child. Some children with SEND can find difficulties with hypermobility that can affect writing or have processing difficulties associated with writing.

**Difficulty:** "My child was struggling to write, completely refusing and saying their hands hurt. Their writing is messy. Refused to write in class. This has been difficult. My child has been told for years that they need to try harder with their writing and it's been a massive barrier to learning. But - it was genuinely painful for them. I wish a teacher had told me sooner that it was such an issue."

Adjustment Made: "School gave my child a laptop."

**Difference:** "My child is completing their work in school."

**Difficulty:** "Overwhelmed with writing. Stopped writing all-together in Year 3. Handed back their pen licence (why are these even a thing?) as this meant they could return to writing in pencil as could not bear to make errors and not be able to erase the ink. Issues with perfectionism. Inability to complete homework and inability to do work in class even though child was assessed as academically gifted. Distress over not being able to do their work."

**Adjustment Made:** "Removed all writing pressure in class. If they only managed a sentence that was enough. Allowed homework to be dictated or classwork finished at home with dictation if needed. Parent provided erasable ink pen which was allowed to be used."

**Difference:** "For one story writing assignment, child dictated work of such a high standard it became clear that they were attempting to write more of a novel than a short piece of homework, which demonstrated their overthinking difficulties. Finally, school could also see their true ability. Confidence was rebuilt slowly. Erasable pen removed pressure of making mistakes.Less stress at home with homework. Eventually returned to writing and no problems with this later through secondary school."

#### v. Other Issues

Other difficulties listed included reward systems (which are not always accessible to a child with SEND), seating issues in class, learning languages and needing to physically move to self-regulate. Solutions were found by schools to reduce stress in these areas with reasonable adjustment.

#### CONCLUSION

For the vast majority of respondents, schools had been able to put a reasonable adjustment in place to help a child be able to participate in school. Apart from in one case providing a laptop for a child, none of the adjustments made appeared to have a financial cost to the school. For the biggest recorded difficulty - uniform and sensory issues - where adjustments were allowed, any financial cost was borne by the parent/carer in providing alternative clothing or shoes.

Most adjustments were made following understanding of the difficulty and small adjustments to school policies or rules.

The impact of the reasonable adjustments made were not just felt by the child but often by the whole family at home. The knock-on effect on the family when a child with SEND experiences difficulties at school needs to be recognised as families of children with SEND. Neither should it be under-estimated how much a small adjustment at school can have a positive impact both on the child, family and classroom.

BURY2GETHER would argue that as the majority of the adjustments made by schools had no financial cost to the school and had a positive impact to the child and family, that schools should consider more whether policies, particularly around school uniform, could be adapted for children with SEND when needed. BURY2GETHER would ask that schools who perhaps currently are reluctant to make such adjustments, consider from this report how reasonable adjustments have had a positive affect on attendance and participation in lessons.

BURY2GETHER understands that not all parents/carers want to complete a survey. We note, though, that this particular survey asked for positive examples of reasonable adjustments by schools. When we have done previous surveys on a variety of topics, we have received more responses with parents/carers telling us what is not working for children with SEND in Bury. BURY2GETHER is concerned that the lower response rate for this survey could well indicate that parents/carers of children with SEND are not always able to provide positive examples of reasonable adjustments in school.

BURY2GETHER will now share the results of this survey with its members and Bury's SEND Improvement and Assurance Board, as well as with the Community Educational Psychology Team. The hope is that parents/carers can see the difference reasonable adjustments have made to other families and have evidence of this to help them liaise with schools for reasonable adjustments for their children experiencing similar difficulties.

## **APPENDIX 1 - SURVEY DATA**

Below are the full responses received from parents/carers.

Difficulty	Affect on Child/Family	Adjustment Made	Result of Adjustment	School Type	SEND	Other Information
Sensory issues with uniform	Extremely distressed and triggered by teachers who don't read EHCPs and think all children with sensory issues are the same.	insisted on a uniform that was overpriced (only		Now EOTAS, previous Specialist Secondary	1	Schools are obsessed with uniform, I was a co-opted governor at a high school that took uniform rules to the extreme. I stressed the uniform was not inclusive in any way, shape or form. Schools have a very backwards approach to uniform and many governors are men in their 60s, 70s with very different thoughts about schoolchildren and the world of work. I was horrified at some of the challenges my child had at her SEN school and feel sorry for children who don't have a voice and can't explain to their parents what is happening.

The stress of reward systems. My child never felt good enough as struggled to get the rewards other kids got for sitting still, not shouting out etc, etc (is PDA)	At school very distressed, particularly when it came to be told not allowed to go on the rewards trip!!! Had to be held on 2 occasions after being told as was so upset In my child's mind they always tried their best but it was never good enough. Led to low self-esteem, poor peer relationships, lack of trust in the staff.	system, and each week situation discussed and	Happier to attend reward trips, feel less stress, pressure, I truly think every day my child could think of nothing else other than the rewards system.	Special Secondary	Autism, ADHD, Sensory Processing Disorder/Sensory Difficulties, PDA	There is so much documented evidence re these shaming rewards/behaviour points systems they shouldn't be allowed in any school for any child, SEND or not!!!
Struggling with sitting at the front in class and changes to seating.	My child would constantly be in trouble and receive sanctions in those classes where they were sat somewhere that was uncomfortable due to sensory needs/unfamiliar peers.	Every teacher asked my child their seating preferences, and who they are comfortable sitting next to. My child is not moved without notice.	My child is engaged in those lessons and receiving positive points instead of sanctions.	Mainstream State Secondary	Autism, ADHD, Sensory Processing Disorder/Sensory Difficulties	This was a difficult adjustment to get applied consistently, due to ADHD it was assumed they would do better at the front - but actually sensory needs meant that just wouldn't work. My child also needed to be near a familiar peer to feel comfortable to occasionally speak - meeting their ADHD needs.
Wearing a blazer - sensory issues	Arguments about putting it in their bag in a morning, missed learning due to being removed from lessons, detentions, sanctions.	The majority of teachers no longer seem to comment on the lack of blazer.	No arguments in the morning, more engaged in class, missed learning because of uniform policies.	Mainstream State Secondary	Autism, ADHD, Sensory Processing Disorder/Sensory Difficulties	Uniform is such a huge issue for my autistic children, they have so many barriers to learning already that clothing should be easily solvable! It also costs the school nothing.

They were getting into trouble for being late to lessons, they missed the bell or got distracted and so are often a couple of minutes late to class.	Detentions, crying, real feeling of dread when they realised they were a minute late because they said they just can't help it and we're not able to just apologise and get on with the lesson. They would then be dysregulated when told off and often removed from the lesson.	A teacher told me they had worked out a system with my child, where my child would come in and explain the reasons they were late and apologise (a little bit like you would in the adult world!). My child was then allowed to get on with the lesson. The lateness also decreased, I think my child was less stressed and more able to use their executive functioning skills when they were not so scared of being told off.	less missed learning.	Mainstream State Secondary	ADHD	It might look like this would be an unfair adjustment but for my child, removing the sanctions that were so deregulating for my child. Allowed them to develop the skills to manage their time, created a calmer classroom, and also taught them communication skills.
My child was struggling to write, completely refusing and saying their hands hurt. Their writing is messy.	Refused to write in class.	They gave my child a laptop	My child is completing their work in school	Mainstream State Secondary	Autism	This has been difficult. My child has been told for years that they need to try harder with their writing and it's been a massive barrier to learning. But - it was genuinely painful for them. I wish a teacher had told me sooner that it was such an issue.
Learning in languages. My child was just overwhelmed by all the verbal content.	Refusing to go to language lessons and not learning.	I explained my child struggled with verbal information and they are now allowed to use a translator tool. Verbal expectations are reduced.	My child is engaged in class and learning a language. Happier with less sanctions	Mainstream State Secondary	Autism	

Wearing trousers. My child prefers joggers. Shoes - prefers trainers. Is due to sensory issues.	Often an argument to make my child even try and put them on	School let my child wear joggers (won't be able to going to high school in Setember).	they are dysregulated at	Mainstream State Primary	Autism, Sensory Processing Disorder/Sensory Difficulties, Learning Difficulty/Disability, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Anxiety	
Not wearing shorts. Allowed to go in his PE kit so does not have to get changed	Now school allow shorts and allow to go in PE kit.	Allowed to wear PE kit on PE days.	Copes better not having to get changed in front of other children	Mainstream State Primary	Autism, ADHD, Sensory Processing Disorder/Sensory Difficulties, SEMH - Social, Emotional or Mental Health Condition, Anxiety	
EBSA, noise, peers, eye contact, smells.	So distressed they have not attended school for two years, this last year being a SEN school. The mention of school sent them in meltdown	Offered a part-time timetable and child still unable to attend. Was given one hour per week equine therapy which my child enjoys going to. Just a shame it's not the 15 hours by law given	My child will get up and dressed for the equine therapy	Special Secondary	Autism, SEMH - Social, Emotional or Mental Health Condition, Anxiety, EBSA	
Complex ADHD/ASC sensory meaning school trousers an issue	Very upset distressed	Can wear tracksuit bottoms	A huge difference	Mainstream State Primary	Autism, ADHD, Sensory Processing Disorder/Sensory Difficulties, Learning Difficulty/Disability, Genetic Condition	

Going to school, uniform, school bells, fire alarms	Distressed about going to school, school refusal	Agreed didn't need to wear the uniform.  Morning routine put in place with same person meeting my child.  Pre-warning of fire alarm.	School acceptance has been a bit better this year	Mainstream State Primary	Autism	
Uncomfortable/dy sregulated in blazer	Arguments about a blazer in the mornings, detentions, removals from lessons, meltdowns.	School agreed my child did not have to wear it.	HUGE difference, argument over it every morning gone, less stressed.	Mainstream State Secondary	Autism, Sensory Processing Disorder/Sensory Difficulties	This was crazy, it's such a simple adjustment but was causing so much stress. The detentions were causing a fear of school, arguments with teachers were frequent, tears. It was easier to get a laptop approved than a simple clothing adjustment that made a world of difference to my child's ability to attend.
Wearing a shirt - difficulty to name emotion and behaviour issue related to this.	Do not want to wearing shirt and all stuff - we get late, lam frustarated and mostly hopeless. Hard to concentrate and focused so homework is a nightmare.	Polo shirt.	Less stres for all of us.	Mainstream State Primary	ADHD, Learning Difficulty/Disability	

My child has big sensory issues to clothes and will not wear shoes - screams, "They're touching my feet." School let my child wear relaxed uniform and Crocs. On days I cannot get them dressed because of anxiety, they can wear the one and only item of clothing they wears outside of school.	We still have bad mornings but not forcing shoes and a strict uniform approach we get to school most days.	Relaxed uniform - Crocs	Less stress some days	Mainstream State Primary	Autism, Sensory Processing Disorder/Sensory Difficulties, Anxiety	Na
My 5 year old struggles to organise their belongings at the end of the day. They often get distracted and are impulsive.	They would get distracted by other things. They would lose or misplace items easily.	to remind them what they need to do at the end of		Mainstream State Primary	ADHD, Sensory Processing Disorder/Sensory Difficulties	
Struggled with the school shirts,pants and tie.		School agreed to let them wear black jogging bottoms and a white polo top with no tie.	Made it (somewhat) easier in the morning to get them dressed.	Mainstream State Primary	Autism, Sensory Processing Disorder/Sensory Difficulties, Genetic Condition, Anxiety, Global Developmental Delay	

morning	Distress every day, severe anxiety at separating at the school gate, unable to eat before school, vomiting, etc	A friend met my child at the gate with a small bean bag and a big sand timer. They both went onto the playground where there were no other children, supervised by a TA and played catch for 5/10 mins.	It seemed like a simple idea, but it made an instant improvement on the morning anxiety. It was fun and competitive	Mainstream State Primary	Autism	This intervention was unfortunately removed after approx 6 months and the distress returned. But it had been very effective
uniform	An uncomfortable uniform just added to the morning distress. He was upset, angry, preoccupied with the feel of uniform.	My child wears the correct school colours, but in the most comfortable way. Grey sweat shorts (all year), a round necked t-shirt (he finds collars very uncomfortable) and a round necked sweatshirt. He rarely wears long trousers but school agree to grey/black joggers if he wants.	It helps immensely as one less battle in a morning and less of a distraction during the day from uncomfortable collars, waistbands etc	Mainstream State Primary	Autism	I've also asked that school don't force my child into wearing a coat. Even in winter. I'll send a coat, more for if it's raining/ snowing heavily. He is always hot and he finds a coat distressing.
	Their conentration and ability to remain on task is impacted	My child sits on a wobble stool	They find it calming.	Mainstream State Primary	Autism	Child previously had a wobble cushion and a peanut ball. The wobble stool is their preferred seat.

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ESBA	Distressed about school	Many adjustments made	Child likes is less crowed as	Mainstream	Autism, ADHD,	
(Emotionally-Bas		to be honest but a good	they gets overwhelmed	State	Sensory	
ed School		one was part-time	around too many people.	Primary	Processing	
Avoidance)		timetable. Also entering			Disorder/Sensory	
		school 5 mins later after			Difficulties, Anxiety	
		school started via school				
		reception to avoid				
		crowds/busy time and				
		leaving 5 minutes earlier,				
		(me collecting them from				
		the school reception).				
		Also providing a yoga				
		ball to sit on in class,				
		fidget toys, chewy toys,				
		brain breaks, time-out				
		card. Unfortunetely, no				
		quiet area to work in or				
		the staffing for 1-1 time				
		for 10mins in morning				
		but my child could attend				
		sensory room on their				
		own if they wanted at				
		start of day.				
Year 7 studying	Could become very	Excellent communication	Child able to stay in class or	Mainstream	Autism	The relationship between
"gothic horror".	distressed in class and run	with English and biology	remove themselves calmly	Private		teachers and parents in
_	out the room. Unable to	staff. Texts/pictures sent	as had advanced notice of	Secondary		contacting home to check in
perceived gore,	complete their work.	to parent to check if	the potential class	,		advance if material was suitable
horror, threat,	·	appropriate or to talk	discussion. Good			was excellent and helped
medical pictures,		through in advance with	relationship built up			enormously.
etc.		child. Images that would	between parents and school			
		be distressing removed	staff. Gradually over time			
		from classroom	child able to cope more so			
			by the time of GCSE had no			
		s, etc.	problem reading war poetry,			
			difficult issues, seeeing			
			<u> </u>			

			medical pictures in biology.		
Year 3. Handed back their pen licence (why are these even a thing?) as this	Inability to complete homework (why do primary children get homework?) and inability to do work in class even though child was assessed as academically gifted. Distress over not being able to do their work.	only managed a sentence that was enough. Allowed homework to be dictated or classwork finished at home with dictation if needed. Parent provided	For one story writing assignment child dictated work of such a high standard it became clear that they were attempting to write more of a novel than a short piece of homework which demonstrated their overthinking difficulties.	Autism	Please get rid of pen licences. They make children who don't get them, or get them last feel ashamed. I was quite proud when my child said they had handed their licence back, even though I had never discussed this with them. It's crazy they felt they needed to do this in order to go
meant could return to writing in pencil as could not bear to make errors and not be able to erase the ink. Issues with perfectionism.		erasable ink pen which was allowed to be used.	Finally, school could also see their true ability. Confidence was rebuilt slowly. Erasable pen removed pressure of making mistakes.Less stress at home with homework. Eventually returned to writing and no problems with this later through secondary school.		back to using a pencil and be able to rub out mistakes.