

Hi,

I have a son with asd, his first school was a nightmare! They made things so hard for us, refused to provide any extra help for him so by the end of the year he was so behind all the other kids. I had meeting after meeting where they would call in a whole army of staff to go against me. I can send you a copy of the email I sent to a social worker about our experiences, I'll post below.

I'm writing to you to let you know our experience with the nsw dept of education, more specifically [REDACTED] if I'm allowed to name them. I will start from our very first interactions with the school.

My son has autism level 2 with moderate language delay and I had to hold him back an extra year because his language skills weren't good enough yet. I approached the school 1 year in advance as advised by my sister who is a school teacher to give them the relevant paperwork so they could prepare for any kind of supports that he may need. I'm quite sure now that was a waste of my own time because it appears to have been immediately dismissed.

The school trial days went really well, they had an extra older student with my son which worked really well and I felt really hopeful he was going to get the support required.

The first week of school, every afternoon I went to his teacher to ask how he went that day. Every time she told me yes he is doing fine and then on the 4th or 5th day she asks does he actually have a diagnosis? I was surprised and said yes he has autism and I've given all the reports to the office, she told me that had not been handed on to her.

During the first year my son had no support with reading etc despite me asking multiple times by the end of the year he was well behind the rest of the class. I had meetings throughout the year asking why my son was at the very bottom of the class but didn't qualify for any kind of help. I also said the teacher wasn't even notified of his diagnosis and his teacher then denied ever having the conversation we had. The teacher straight out lied in the meeting with the vice principal. I would go to meetings with just myself versus the schools army of people being the teacher, vice principal, school counsellor, dept of education etc. Nothing in regards to supports were ever agreed upon not even a simple reading program. I asked to see the form that's filled in that goes to the dept of education to decide if a child needs funding. They showed me, I could see they originally put my son as having no language issues and that had been crossed out to say he did but that wasn't enough to qualify for any funding.

Ok he's not eligible for funding but that doesn't mean the school shouldn't support him and so I continued on asking for help for him.

My son started refusing to go to school, it was so hard to get him there, the teacher really didn't seem to try much with him and he didn't understand anything so was anxious and didn't want to go. My life was becoming so very stressful and I would go to the school in tears asking for help but they would refuse to offer any support and in fact seemed to go out of their way to be difficult. One of the main things I was asking was for a communication book where the teacher would just write down if anything happened at school that day, if they think there is something extra we should work on and just the fact it would give me something to build on when trying to engage with my son later in

the day which is important in building language skills. I was told by the principal if I didn't like the school then I was welcome to take my son elsewhere..I didn't know it at the time but I am aware this is now called gate keeping and it is so infuriatingly frustrating. You feel you have no one on your side and the school likes to make out you're just a hysterical mother. We had incidents where the teacher on duty had yelled at my son for not understanding instructions obviously completely unaware for his autism and language delay.

When I communicated that my son was refusing school often, the teacher took him alone to another room and spoke to him quite harshly about it - at first there was denials that this even happened then I was told she thought she was helping but of course when a child is highly anxious anything like that is just going to make things worse and it did. I was not allowed to have any of the teachers or principals direct email address, anything I wanted to communicate had to go through schools reception first which I also felt was another gate keeping issue. The school my children attend now I can email the principal and any of my kids teachers directly.

This didn't just get better on its own, I was lucky enough to be accepted into the brighter futures program by SDN children's services After being referred by lifestart and my caseworker became our advocate, we were completely ignored until I had an advocate with me and then also a representative from the dept of education until the school finally agreed to cooperate. I don't understand why they would do this to families that have children with disabilities? Our lives are already hard enough and I just guess the complete lack of empathy for our situation is what got to me the most. You feel really isolated and alone. I was so frustrated that by the end of the school year my sons kindy teacher refused to be alone with me as she believed I was aggressive. My son is now in year 4 and my daughter in year 1 and I've NEVER had an issue with any other teacher. It just became sooooo ridiculous, if we were talking she made the teacher from next door come in to supervise. I remember Around two years later I was having a conversation with another one of [REDACTED]'s teachers (had no issues with teacher, just a normal catch up on where my son was at) and the teacher that used to come in to play supervisor kept walking back and forth outside the class calling out are you ok to the teacher like I was some kind of psycho that goes around attacking teachers at school meetings. The first year of my sons schooling was by far the most stressful year I've ever had, my hands broke out in eczema when I've never had eczema before, that has only happened one other time and that was after I gave evidence in a criminal trial at the downing centre that's how difficult it was made for us.

We ended up leaving Sydney and moving to Port Stephens, we had bullying issues that couldn't be controlled by the school in Sydney.

Please let me know if some things I've written are not completely clear or if you have any questions, I am more than happy to answer.

Thanks
Gina :)

Sent from my iPhone