

**Every day a child with autism is denied an education.
Let's put them back in the picture.**



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WE NEED AN EDUCATION

Children and young people are being denied an education simply because they're autistic. It's time to put them back in the picture. We Need An Education is calling for a fairer deal for children and young people with autism from our education system. The facts are indisputable. Pupils with autism are being badly let down.

ACCESS

Nearly 40% of parents have been waiting over 18 months for an assessment for an Education, Health and Care plan.

EXCLUSIONS

Formal exclusions of children with autism in England have risen by almost 60% in five years.

SUPPORT

Nearly 120,000 pupils with special educational needs have autism – and this number is growing.

PROGRESSION

Fewer than 1 in 4 young people with autism access education beyond school.

Their right to education must be protected.
Together we have the power to achieve this.
Join the fight at #weneedaneducation

In September 2018 Ambitious about Autism conducted a survey of over 900 parents and carers. For a detailed breakdown of the survey and other statistical sources, please visit: ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/we-need-an-education.

ACCESS

Getting the right support to meet children's needs is far too difficult.

Every child deserves to get the best start at school. But many families struggle to get their child's needs assessed promptly and the right educational support put in place.

Nearly 40% have been waiting over 18 months for an assessment for an Education, Health and Care plan – entitling children to extra support at school.

Nearly 90% of parents said the stress of getting their child the right support at school caused them to lose sleep.

"It shouldn't have to be this way. Years of battling instead of enjoying my child's life."

WE NEED CHANGE

A medical diagnosis of autism should automatically trigger an assessment for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). 85% of parents and carers agree.



EXCLUSIONS

Thousands of children with autism are missing from our education system.

Children with autism are disproportionately at risk from exclusion from school.

Formal exclusions of children with autism in England have risen by almost 60% in five years.

Meanwhile ‘informal’ exclusions slip under the radar. These incidents – such as sending pupils home early or banning them from school trips – are unlawful, but go unrecorded.

56% of the families we surveyed said their child had been unlawfully sent home from school, or denied an education.

Exclusions damage young people and their family’s lives.

“I had to give up my job because I never know when he will be allowed in school.”

“He does shorter days, but if he had the right support he could manage full days.”

WE NEED CHANGE

We need to hold the system to account. For example, schools should remain responsible for children they exclude and any found to be acting unlawfully should face penalties.

Ofsted should have the power to investigate unlawful exclusions and take action.

SUPPORT

School staff need more support to help children with autism thrive.

Nearly 120,000 pupils with special educational needs have autism.

Every teacher will teach a child with autism at some point and so all teachers must understand their needs.

Young people and teaching staff need more support.

“More training on all the different types of autism would make the world of difference.”

“If you don’t know how to help a child to do something, you shouldn’t just assume that they can’t do it.”

WE NEED CHANGE

We need all teachers and school staff, from governors to teaching assistants to be fully autism aware and trained to spot and help children with autism.



PROGRESSION

Young people with autism deserve a fair chance to continue their learning.

Fewer than 1 in 4 young people with autism access education or training beyond school.

This isn't because they don't want to, or don't have the ability, but because the right opportunities and support are missing to enable them to do this.

Only 19% of young people with autism say they have had good careers advice.

"It seems that local authorities and school have no ambitions for autistic students. As the child gets older, provision seems to disappear."

WE NEED CHANGE

We need to ensure there is enough post 16 specialist provision for young people with autism to pursue their goals. This includes better careers advice and pathways into employment through work experience and autism confident employers.

WE NEED AN EDUCATION POEM

By Bella Cope, Ambitious about Autism youth patron

I can remember a time when people said to me
High school days are the greatest of your life; you'll see
As though it was a given that they'd be the best
Leaving you feeling anything but stressed

So, at 11 I moved to what felt like hell
The noise and crowds leaving me just an empty shell

High school felt like an alien land
I felt trapped in a place for which I had not planned

For four years I managed to just get by
I kept telling myself I just needed to try
But by this point I wanted to be anyone but me
I craved to be a girl able to cope and feel free

Then at 15 I fell apart unable to cope anymore
I had to drop out of school for that I was sure
I was misunderstood, overwhelmed and terrified
All I wanted to ever do was escape school and hide

I started to get help from therapists, doctors and more
But in my head, it was too late I had nothing left to live for
After many months of struggling to see a way out
The professionals finally listened to what my mum was on about

After assessments and tests, they realised she was right
Being diagnosed on the autistic spectrum allowed
my future to look bright
For me a diagnosis provided answers and hope
It meant I could return to school with the right support to cope

After years of struggling as a girl with autism in education
Now I had my diagnosis school supported me without hesitation
I was able to complete my GCSE's and A Levels too
Getting to this point in my life felt too good to be true

I know now looking back that the education system can be cruel
It's not designed for people like to me access school
It's a continuous battle and a lengthy fight
To get students like me in a school that is right

But remember there is value in looking at the wrong
Because it can go on to help others to find where they too belong
So, believe me when I say we will not give up this fight
That every autistic child deserves an education that's right.

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity for children and young people with autism. We provide services, raise awareness and understanding, and campaign for change. Through TreeHouse School, Ambitious College and the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust we offer specialist education and support. Our ambition is to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.

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