Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the management and minimisation of bullying and violence in ACT schools

Submission Number: 07
Date Authorised for Publication: 21 May 2019
Hi

I would like to provide the information below to the Committee on Violence in Schools in the context of having a primary school aged child with complex needs who has displayed violence towards students and teaching staff and also has been on the receiving end of restrictive practices over a number of years by teachers, along with extensive school suspensions over many years.

My child has autism, ADHD, anxiety, dysgraphia and a history of trauma. While his original school did have attempts to assist him with modified learning and learning assistants - the ever present triggers of social justice, embarrassment, fear and frustration resulted in significant behavioural issues. The school called me multiple times per week for years to:

- collect him due to violent outbursts
- had multi-week suspensions, and one for a month
- enforced part-day attendance, and
- a never ending sense of mistrust of the school from my son's perspective and the school towards him.

Staff

- restrained him physically multiple times
- called the police to restrain/contain him on numerous occasions
- would put the school in lock-down
- would not allow my son on the playground at breaks for over a term (had to remain in an indoor corridor)
- encouraged me to seek different medications to modify my son's behaviour
- would not allow him to attend school due to occupational violence, work health safety issues and so that other parents would feel that justice had been served.

Despite being identified to be part of the Gifted and Talented program, my son barely engaged in learning as he was rarely allowed at school.

As it was very clear that the school would not have him attend the school, supported by a decision from the ACT Directorate of Education, last year we moved schools and hence, where we live.

The new school were wonderful, transitioned him slowly, welcomed him, made classroom and LSA modifications, engaged constructively, involved NSET and the school psychologist positively and there is a Student Education and Impact Report and other supports for him.
Due to a range of strategies - ranging from a specially recruited youth worker being available, modified learning, having a sensory space he can go to, actively building trust with teaching staff, structured play at times, and training staff to be aware of autism and his triggers there has not been one violent incident with students or staff, no suspensions, no calls to immediately collect him from school, no suggested or enforced part-day attendance. My son is learning, wants to go to school, has friends and no longer wants to commit self-harm.

We are now in our third term at the new school. That means over 120 days without a violent incident - due to the school actively creating an ongoing positive relationship with my son and having proactive strategies in place to not trigger anger, rage, frustration and other extreme emotions. This is in a mainstream school setting.

I hope this submission illustrates that violence can be markedly reduced through a school’s culture, attitude and knowledge of complex needs, and being truly inclusive in deeds rather than through school motto’s.