

School exclusion discriminates against children with disabilities

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As the CEO of TCES Group which is a social enterprise and one of the largest independent special school providers to children and young people with SEND in London, I am delighted with the ruling [in a recent school exclusion case](#).

It forces us all collectively to consider behavioural issues in their correct context; a breakdown in communication between the school and the disabled child and sometimes also parents/carers that must be addressed in working together and never in excluding the child.

We must use inclusive practice to solve our communication breakdowns. As every head and teacher knows, deep down they came into teaching to make a real difference. We cannot make a difference if we continue to use old, staid methods of addressing issues of disability and speech, language, sensory and communication needs by isolation and social exclusion.

Nothing is learned except that school is a punitive place where if I, as a disabled child, display the behaviour linked directly to my disability I will be excluded from the one place that is supposed to understand my needs and support me in how to regulate my behaviour and communicate in a more pro-social way.

I look forward to the creativity that this ruling will inspire in every school up and down the country and recommend that we start to solve this problem with staff training and support on

autistic spectrum condition (ASC) and social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH).

We also consider internal reflection support for pupils through social stories and reflection processes as well as some extremely exciting new training on non-violent responses (NVR).

Finally, we ensure that the environment is adjusted to take into account pupils' speech, language, sensory and communication needs.

However, the most important thing we can collectively do is to stop seeing our ASC and SEMH children and young people as problems, and indeed someone else's problem, but instead see them for what they are: talented and exceptional pupils who need support to unlock their many gifts.

For those who will inevitably respond to this landmark judgement by saying that this is the providence of Alternative Provision and nothing to do with mainstream schools my answer would be a very firm 'no'. This affects us all and we are all going to have to adjust to a brave new world where we cannot 'dump' our problems through exclusion but instead change our ethos, thinking, communication, systems and processes to adjust to the basic rights of our disabled autistic and SEMH children to an education free from exclusion.

[Read the full story regarding the case on the National Autistic Society's website.](#)