

Behaviour in School

As the Mum of a child with ED, I find that we don't often talk about or even think about her condition on a daily basis, but on occasions we have needed to explain in detail what she has and why and that can often be more complicated than I think it's going to be.

Leonie, my daughter is now 11 and was first diagnosed when she was 3 years old, after months of tests and trips to the doctors, we then found ourselves in touch with the ED Society. At that time, we didn't notice much more than the missing teeth, which was her most obvious sign of ED, so that was our focus. We had some information from the ED Society, which we used to talk to her primary school when she was 5, and then didn't really think much more about it. Leonie got her first set of teeth at 6, and so her classmates saw that transition and accepted it. Other than the teeth, and time off for trips to the dental hospital she seemed to have no other problems at school.

We had to move schools when she was 9, and as always we gave the basic information to her new Head and Class teacher – the teeth, the potential to overheat, nosebleeds, but didn't really say much more, we didn't really think she exhibited any other signs.

By now she had her 3rd set of dentures, and was very determined that she didn't want anyone to know, so we explained the situation, including the time off school for the dentist and all was fine for about a year.

Until one parents evening, when we were told that our usually very well behaved child was acting up in class, starting to be disruptive, not paying attention... behaviour we thought was at odds with how she was at home. As the teacher was explaining in more detail what was going on, it all suddenly clicked into place. I remembered reading in the information we'd received when she was first diagnosed about aspects of the condition that we just didn't see in her at home.

As the teacher and I discussed this, it became clear to both of us, that what they were seeing as disruptive behaviour was because she was overheating in class. Until that year she'd always been in colder classrooms, and at 9 she, along with the rest of the class were expected to sit still for longer, as they practised tests, did more book work rather than more active tasks.

Diana shared with me a special pack of information designed specifically for helping schools understand the condition and how to help children do their best at school. I shared that with the teacher, and she said it was a revelation. All of a sudden, all of these actions that Leonie took suddenly made so much more sense.

The bright child they had been teaching wasn't changing, her environment was impacting her. As a direct result of the pack, we agreed a variety of actions, Leonie would be asked to make random errands if she seemed to get distracted, to get her cool air, she was moved around to find the best place to sit, but wasn't singled out – they made it a fun activity for all.

And the result, the disruptions stopped, she has continued to be able to study harder, and achieved great results in her tests, and is heading towards her SATs in a far better place than she would have been without that intervention.

In sharing this story, as one parent to others, I'd encourage you to get hold of the information pack and share it with your child's teachers if you haven't already, to look at it closely and even if you don't see the behaviour described, understand that it may be there, perhaps not as extreme as it might be described in the booklet, but there all the same.

We're so grateful for the help that small book of information has given us, it really has transformed Leonie's school year. You can get a hold of a copy from the ED Society office – either call 01242 261332 or email info@edsociety.

Sharon Cooper

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