

# Lewisham's Autistic Young Experts' Panel NewsLetter

Autumn - Issue 2



## Voices That Matter: Our Autistic Young Experts Speak Out

What our Autistic Young Experts want teachers, families and the world to know.

This term, our Autistic Young Experts Panel came together to share their lived experiences of school, friendships, family life, and how the wider world understands autism. Their insights were honest, powerful, and full of wisdom that we all need to hear. Below is a summary of the key messages they want to share with teachers, families, and everyone beyond school.

### Why is Autistic Young Experts' Panel important?

- Lived experience gives the most accurate insights
- It prevents decisions being made about autistic people without them
- Being listened to builds confidence, belonging, and self-advocacy skills.
- It shows autistic young people that their experiences and opinions matter and can make change.
- It improves understanding among professionals.
- It makes services more accessible and inclusive
- They provide autistic young people with a safe space to meet, share experiences, and realise they are not alone.
- When organisations consult autistic young experts, they are more likely to reflect on their practice and challenge outdated approaches

## What We Want Teachers and Schools to Know

Our young autistic experts want school to be a place where they can learn, feel safe, and be understood. Here's just a few things they want staff to keep in mind:

- I will always try my best. I really want to learn, I just sometimes need to take a break, sometimes my brain is too tired and I need to sit back on a task or draw but I will always do the work.
- If we're quiet, doodling, or taking a short break, we are still learning and trying our best.
- In regards to substitute lessons, these can be stressful and disruptive and can be hard to navigate around. It would be nice to have a bulletin of substitute lessons that could be published for students

## What we want our families and close people to know

Our autistic young people had lots of heartfelt things to say about home life and communication, here are few things we felt were important to pass along:

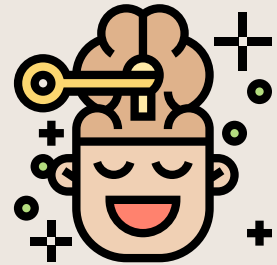
- Sometimes I can't control my tone or how I speak. Sometimes I might do something that comes across rude, I don't mean it.
- Don't assume you know what I mean when I say things because most are literal with no reading between the lines needed
- My family know me really well just when I come home from school I don't want to talk and they don't understand that they are not an exception

## What we want our families and close people to know

Perhaps the most powerful part of the session came when the panel shared what they wish everyone understood about autism:

- Generally assume positive intent e.g. whatever social cue I failed to pick up on I probably didn't realise existed I likely didn't mean to offend
- Autism is different viewing not different hardware or devices
- Being autistic isn't bad — and a diagnosis doesn't change who we are, it just helps us understand ourselves.

The young people who took part were clear, they want understanding, honesty, flexibility and respect - not pity, assumptions or stereotypes. Their voices are shaping how we think, how we teach, and how we build a more inclusive school and community. We are incredibly proud of them for speaking so openly and for helping us all learn how to make school a place where autistic young people feel seen, heard and valued.



## How can you get involved?

- Submit questions or topics for future panels.
- Share this newsletter with staff and families.
- Implement strategies suggested by the panel to make your setting more autism-friendly.
- Read, listen and discuss!

**HAPPY  
HOLIDAYS**