



## **Improving outcomes: working with parent carers**

### **A local setting's experience of working with parent carers**

In this article, a local setting shares their successful journey with Child J's autism diagnosis. They explore the ways in which working with Child J's parents has contributed to positive outcomes for him, including improving his attendance and easing his anxiety both at home and at school.



Child J has an autism diagnosis, is doing very well academically, is articulate, knowledgeable, and appears to be managing well in school. J's parents communicated that he was experiencing frequent emotional dysregulation at home, and it became apparent that J was masking during the school day. When asked by adults in school if he was OK, needed support or needed a break, he would always respond that he was 'fine', and would always politely decline any offer of support or adjustments to the school day.

The school listened to the parents' views and made time for them to share the challenges they were experiencing daily at home, as well as the impact that these were having on their family life. Since J's emotional dysregulation was harder for adults in the school to detect, it was challenging for us to work out the best provision for him. We signposted the family to external support, and we provided opportunities for Emotional Literacy work and time for J to regulate at the end of the school day. We could only try to predict what J might find supportive during the school day, so it was difficult to identify whether our provision was having any positive impact, at first.

Things were certainly not any easier at home: J's anxiety levels were so high that he was beginning to be unable to come into school in the mornings. This term, J has just started to be able to share his authentic views with a few trusted adults. We have seen incredible progress, and for the next step we prioritised hearing J's views. This has been a real challenge for him, but with the help of the Autism and Social Communication Team and



his parents, J has begun to share his thoughts and feelings with us. He even suggested some strategies which he feels will benefit him within his school day.



Through discussions together, we identified that sensory was an important factor in helping J to regulate his emotions, and we talked about key times of the day that this could be useful. J now has a 'meet and greet' supported start to the day, sensory regulation is supported with a warm drink and crunchy snack. During the day, J has a class responsibility of gathering temperature data from thermometers outside, which allows him to have a movement break when needed. The

impact has been that J has been in school every day since the plan was introduced and is spending greater periods of time in the classroom.

Gathering authentic pupil views has been crucial in helping us to get the provision right for J, and this could not have been achieved without time, trust, and patience. In school, this plan is working well at the moment, but we know that flexibility is key. We will, therefore, seek pupil views regularly and obtain regular feedback from parents to gain a better understanding of how this is helping at home. For us, this experience has highlighted the importance of collaborative working with parents and outside agencies, and has also emphasised the power of supporting and enabling children to talk to trusted key adults in school, so that they feel heard and really listened to.