

**INQUIRY INTO STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR
SPECIAL NEEDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES SCHOOLS**

Name: Name suppressed (PC)

Date received: 22 January 2017

Partially
Confidential

My son attended _____ in Moorebank NSW in 2014 and 2015. In Kindergarten, he underwent testing with the help of the school psychologist and was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder in October of 2014. He also has anxiety and was seeing a psychologist at the time. He was found to have a very high IQ but in terms of school, he has trouble with things like handwriting and maintaining focus if something else has his attention, and a range of sensory differences. Social interactions can also be a challenge.

The school said that his disability was not severe enough to qualify for more support services so that he would just need to share the existing teacher's aides that were available within the school for the other students (as there is a large hearing support unit in the school and other students with disabilities).

His kindergarten teacher and the school counsellor were very supportive in undergoing the testing. He was allowed to attend a Gifted and Talented science class in Kindergarten, which he loved. Unfortunately this was not continued the following year.

The school had teacher's aides who would spend time in the room but not much one-on-one time with my son. It was a challenge adapting to primary school, but kindergarten was OK, for the most part. His writing speed was not great but he was allowed extra time to complete tasks and his Kindergarten teacher was fairly relaxed about it.

Even though the diagnosis was given to the school in October 2014, a support matrix was not put in place until March 2015.

In Year 1, things changed and my son had a less supportive teacher. He struggled to complete his writing tasks as quickly as the teacher wanted him to. He was often left at his desk to sit for an entire day or two without completing any work, or sent to another teacher's room as a 'naughty' boy, to try to get him to do the work there on his own in the corner. This might be during a period of anxiety or when he was just having trouble getting started.

I would come to pick him up at the end of school and ask how his day had been and find out that he had been sitting there all day and no one had helped him and he felt his teacher was, "angry with him again."

His teacher knew that we were seeing an occupational therapist to help with his writing technique and pencil grasp. She would refuse to get a teacher's aide to help him, stating that she did not want him to become reliant on them, when all he would need was someone to sit with him, even for a few minutes to help him get started.

We tried to suggest alternative strategies like working on the computer for some of his work instead, but she did not let him do this for very long and was not very supportive.

My son was also being bullied by students in his class but the teacher did not address this properly. He was still often made to sit right next to the boys who were doing it. When he reported acts of physical violence to teachers on duty in the playground, (such as being kicked, hit with backpacks, tripped over deliberately etc.) it was not handled correctly and the boys did not get disciplined. He was told on one occasion by the teacher on duty (not his class teacher), "Well, they have seen you come and tell me, so they have stopped now," then no report was made.

The same boys harassed him all year in the toilets - they would tease him at the trough while urinating, so he started using the cubicles and so they would come underneath the doors. They also bothered him on the playground, in the classroom and library etc.

I tried to address it many times with his teacher, the head of the disability support services and had one meeting with everyone including the principal, but it was not being handled well. My son was often not believed and it caused a lot of anxiety for him.

He did not have a happy year at school at all in Year 1 and so we decided to change schools and relocated to Queensland. Even though his new school is very different, he was bullied by students in the toilets on his very first day so he still has anxiety about using the toilets as a result.