

**Submission
No 418**

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

Name: Name suppressed

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I am a parent of an 11 year old boy in a NSW primary school. He has mild autism and ADHD both diagnosed at age 6. Due to insufficient learning support throughout his schooling and in spite of recommendations from health professionals informing the types of supports he needs, consequently he has fallen significantly behind, predominantly in literacy, he has low self esteem and he hates school. This has resulted in challenging behaviours, which have resulted in a number of suspensions from school. Many of these behaviours are consistent with autism and ADHD. Suspension has not been an effective strategy for my child who does not want to go to school. Further, my child's health professionals have in writing to the school, expressed that suspension is inappropriate for him given that he is vulnerable. In addition, I am a single working parent and the sole provider and therefore suspension puts an enormous pressure on me in this regard and exacerbates an already stressful family situation.

Data from around the world show that children with disability are over-represented in school suspension data. However the NSW Department of Education does not collect disability information amongst those who are suspended. In addition, suspension is not an effective behaviour modifier and further marginalises students who already find school incredibly difficult. There is no evidence to support the use of suspension in these children and it is discouraged in both the autism and ADHD literature. Suspension also results in these children having a negative school record and leading to further prejudice in the school enrolment selection process, specifically in out of area placements.

I am also aware anecdotally of many families of children with disability in mainstream schools who have changed schools in their quest for better support and inclusion. The NSW Department of Education does not publish data on the proportion of children with disability who change schools during their schooling (I.e, from one primary to another, not primary to secondary)

Inclusion of children with disability and equity in education cannot be achieved without the data being collected and evaluated so that unconscious and conscious bias can be addressed and that KPIs of individual schools can be compared and benchmarking and best practice can be implemented. These data need to be collected. These data should be made public. Currently principals have absolute power and no accountability because no one is looking at the data.

I look forward to your response.