

Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS)

Coproduction in action

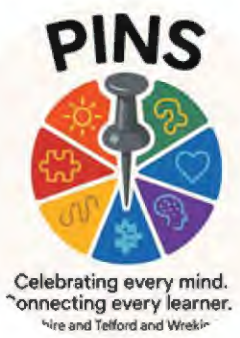
Shropshire Primary Schools

Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools
PACC
Championing your voice

PINS
Celebrating every mind.
Connecting every learner.
Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin ICB

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Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS)



Over two years, PACC have worked with Shropshire schools on the PINS pilot project (Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools). The programme began with twenty primary schools in 2024/25 and expanded to fifteen more in 2025/26. Funded by the Department for Education through NHS England, PINS brought together health professionals, education specialists and parent carers to strengthen inclusion in mainstream settings.

Aims and Approach

PINS supported schools to develop whole-school SEND provision, introduce early interventions, upskill staff and build stronger partnerships with families. The programme encouraged a shift from “fixing the child” to creating supportive environments that reduce barriers for neurodivergent pupils.

Training and Support

Each school completed a SEN audit and received five days of tailored support, alongside training in areas such as sensory processing, neurodevelopmental learning styles, mental health, behaviour as communication, food sensitivity, Developmental Language Disorder and parent carer engagement.

Parent Carer Involvement

Parent carers were central to the programme. Every school hosted three meetings with PACC, giving families a safe space to share experiences. Themes from these discussions informed school practice and were shared with wider partners including the Integrated Care Board, DfE, NHS England and academic evaluators. PACC also supported families through closed Facebook groups for each parent carer school community.

Year Two Focus on Co-Production

The original twenty schools moved into a second year focused on co-production. Each selected an area—such as communication, transitions or inclusive uniform policies—to develop with parent carers. Schools attended co-production training and received one-to-one support to progress their projects.

Impact and Next Steps

Although PINS funding ended in March 2026, its impact was clear. Relationships between schools and families strengthened, and children’s experiences improved. Building on this success, PACC secured funding to deliver coproduction training to all secondary schools in Shropshire.

What is Coproduction?



Co-production is enshrined in law within the Children and Families Act 2014 and is a golden thread through the new SEND Reforms. It is the process of organisations and service providers working in equal partnership with people who have lived experience. In education, this means schools and parent carers coming together to shape decisions, policies, and practices that directly affect children and young people. Working in coproduction is fundamental to creating an inclusive environment and should happen at individual, operational and strategic levels.

Individual Coproduction

At an individual level, coproduction often happens naturally. A parent carer and school staff might work together to adjust a child's uniform because of sensory needs—for example, agreeing that black tracksuit bottoms are more comfortable than standard trousers. Through open discussion, they identify a solution that best supports the child.

Examples of individual coproduction in Shropshire schools include:

A pupil found it difficult to stay regulated within PE. After discussion with his parent carer, it was agreed he would take part in alternative physical activities. He now cycles with his TA during PE—remaining active in a way that suits his needs.

A pupil was dysregulated after missing Beaver camp and the chance to pitch his tent. His TA brought a tent into school, and during a PE session they practised putting it up, spending time inside, and taking it down, helping him regulate again.

A child found the journey home dysregulating, so the parent carer worked with the headteacher to plan support. A rotating seat helped her to calm, and the school arranged access to one in a quiet space during the day and at home time.

Operational/ Strategic Coproduction

At an operational and strategic level, coproduction becomes a way of shaping how the school works for all pupils. Building on the uniform example, this would involve parent carers and school leaders working together to create a uniform policy that meets the needs of both neurodivergent and neurotypical pupils.

Strategically, schools can review how they work with parent carers, involving them in planning future approaches and ensuring partnership becomes standard practice rather than superficial. Parent carers and school leaders shape the school's vision together, recognising the value of lived experience alongside educational expertise.

Examples of operational and strategic coproduction projects in Shropshire PINS schools include:

- Uniform policy
- Transition planning and soft landings
- School reports
- Homework approaches
- Accessible communication
- Relational and behaviour policies

These projects recognise that parent carers bring lived experience, while school staff bring educational expertise—and that the best outcomes come from combining both.

How Shropshire Schools Approached Coproduction

Schools started by inviting all parent carers to express interest in a particular area of work, using a range of communication methods—face-to-face conversations, written invitations, phone calls or digital messages. Some schools also used a representational model, specifically targeting parent carers with lived experience directly relevant to the issue.

However, schools were clear that the working party needed to focus on the voices of parent carers of children with SEN. This group represents a minority whose lived experience is distinct but is often marginalised or lost within the wider parent community. When all parents are invited, the parent carer opinions and experience can be diluted. Their insights were essential to shaping meaningful change for children with SEN.

At the first meeting, the group were introduced to some shared principles:

- This is a working group, not a space for airing grievances.
- The needs of the wider school community must be considered.
- Compromise and collaboration are essential.
- Everyone recognises the realities of school life and the value of lived experience.
- Professional disagreements are handled respectfully and never personally.
- All participants remain open to trying something new.

As part of the process, school teams often began meetings with blank sheets of paper which could be daunting. They invited parent carers to be completely honest, reassuring them that feedback would be received without defensiveness. This approach set the tone for open, respectful and solutions-focused discussions. Parent carers were encouraged to share both positive and challenging experiences, and staff teams listened with genuine openness. Across settings, feedback was taken constructively, demonstrating a shared commitment to meaningful change.

The group shared experiences, explored ideas and drafted proposals together. Because each meeting focused on a single issue, everyone had the space to unpack the detail—what was working, what wasn't, and why. This focus allowed for richer questioning, clearer understanding and more thoughtful solutions than would have been possible in a broad, wide-ranging discussion. Every meeting was professional, positive and genuinely collaborative.

Once a draft or proposal was ready, it was shared with the wider school community—SEND and non-SEND families—for feedback. Schools offered multiple ways to respond so that all voices could be heard. The message was clear: this is a work in progress, not a fixed document.

Moving forward, schools continue the process through reviewing how well the new approach is working, gathering feedback from parent carers, pupils, and staff. Adjustments are made as needed, creating a cycle of continuous improvement.

Who is Elsa?
Why Communication is Fundamental

Communication was one of the most common issues to be raised in PINS parent carer meetings across the county and is key to building quality relationships with parent carers. SEND families often walk a tightrope — navigating school systems while advocating for their children's needs. When communication works well, families feel heard and supported.

There is often an assumption that families understand school processes but parent carers frequently tell us they are unsure or feel embarrassed to ask.

I was told my child was receiving support from ELSA. I thought that they were talking about a TA and asked who Elsa was. It was really embarrassing.

Schools naturally use acronyms and professional terminology throughout the day. Because this language becomes so familiar to staff, it's easy to overlook it's use and that parent carers may not always know or understand these terms.

In PINS schools where communication was strongest, teachers and SENDCos maintained regular, proactive contact with parent carers. There was no one-size-fits-all approach. Offering a choice of communication methods – whether in person, by email, phone call, or Teams – helped accommodate personal preferences as well as working and caring commitments.

Parent carers of children with SEND often say that they can feel isolated and on the fringes of their school community. They often feel labelled as anxious or ' a bad parent', misunderstood or judged. Where a school acknowledges the parent carers experience, these feelings often change.

"At his old school they kept saying there was nothing wrong and that I had to go to parenting classes. In the end I felt so bad, the doctor put me on antidepressants. When I moved here, the SENDCo immediately listened to me and my son was quickly assessed. He now has an autism diagnosis and is being assessed for ADHD. All I wanted was for someone to say, 'I hear you."

Parent carers value openness and honesty—clarifying expectations without dismissing concerns. If an assessment cannot take place, explaining why and offering, "Here's what we can do..." helps families feel heard. Giving clear examples of available support, and continuing to communicate, shows that concerns have been recognised and acted upon.

There is no escaping the delays many families face when waiting for assessments or diagnoses. During this time, parent carers often describe frustration and the sense that nothing is happening. This was not the case in schools where communication remained strong.

In settings that kept regular contact—sharing updates, checking in, and offering ongoing feedback about the support their child was receiving—parental anxiety was significantly reduced. Even when external processes were slow, families felt reassured that the school understood their child's needs and was actively supporting them.

Consistent, open communication maintained trust, reduced stress, and ensured children continued receiving the support they needed throughout the waiting period.

Case Study: St. Giles CofE Primary School
The Courage to be Vulnerable

Beginning the Journey

Becky Dawes, SENDCO at St Giles, was keen for the school to engage with the PINS project and initiated the process. Senior Leadership completed the initial audit, and the whole staff team welcomed PINS into school. Engagement with PINS became a core focus of the 2025–26 School Development Plan. Staff recognised the increasing number of pupils with neurodiverse traits and were motivated to strengthen their practice.

"The first parent/carer meeting was held privately with PACC.
This part made us – as a staff team – feel quite vulnerable. We are so used to being at the centre of conversations about what is happening in school, that it was hard to know important conversations were going on that we were not able to hear. Whilst we understood and accepted this was a valuable opportunity for parents and carers to share their experiences, we found it hard.
Feeling a bit wobbly!" Beth Rowe Deputy Headteacher



Right after the meeting, a parent approached school staff in tears, sharing concerns they had previously felt unable to voice. This prompted deep reflection: why had some parents tried to share worries about behaviours at home but not felt heard? Despite aiming to be open and approachable, something was preventing effective communication.

Outcomes from self-reflection

1. Try and let go of any defensiveness – it isn't helpful! We had lots of conversations where we worked through our 'but we do that', 'but we are really open and approachable' to the point where we were able to say to ourselves – even though we are trying really hard to be all of those things, there's obviously some work to do.

2. What about our communication with parents is making it hard for us to either understand the significance of what a parent is sharing or to give the impression we aren't taking those concerns seriously? We had a couple of thoughts about that – maybe our parents evening slots are so crammed with information sharing that important nuggets shared by parents are not registered properly by teachers. Could it be that when we first hear a parent sharing about a trait they see at home, that we respond with 'we don't see that in school' and that makes parents feel that the door is shut on the conversation?
So what do we do about that...

3. We had already begun working on a document with a number of parents which sought to capture their lived experience with their child – especially where ND traits might be seen very clearly at home but not necessarily in school. Following that initial PACC meeting I worked with a number of families to complete our 'Supporting Your Child' document and to begin rolling this out more widely in school. As we approached the summer holidays and a key transition point for many children, this became an important way to capture potential barriers, positive strategies and the wider context for children who might not have a formal diagnosis or even be on the SEN register. This is still work in progress and we need to keep following up with class teachers to ensure that these documents remain fresh and don't just get archived/ignored.

4. Consider ways to offer more opportunities for parents/carers to share their concerns – at our second PACC/parent/carer meeting we asked for our parent/carers views on a couple of options:
-Offering appointments at parents evening with me (dep head) and/or Mrs Dawes (SENDCO)
-Having a table at parents evening but no appointment system so people could just drop-in for a chat
After listening to parent/carer feedback on those ideas, we reconsidered. There was a general feeling that parents & carers might be a bit reluctant to approach a 'SEND' table in front of other parents/carers. We are currently considering alternatives e.g. maybe an open day for pastoral, SEN discussions where key staff would be available throughout the day and parents could book a slot.



Where are we now?

-TAs and teachers have responded very positively to training from our ND practitioner and are excited to embed new strategies
-We are working closely with the ND practitioner team to provide more intensive support for particular children and staff (where clusters of pupils with ND traits require different approaches)
-We are keen to develop a 'nothing about us, without us' approach to help us really reflect parent/carer and CYP views in our policies

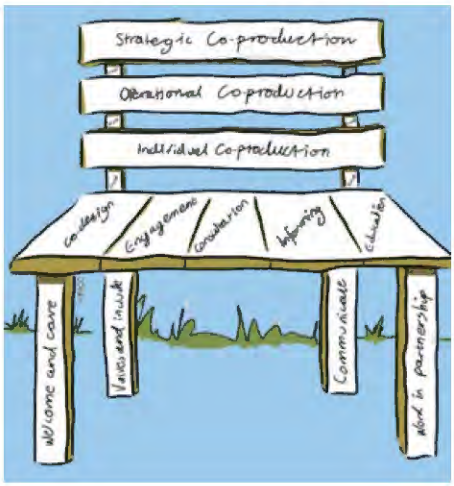
Case Study: Greenfields Primary School
Uniform Policy Adaptations for Inclusion

Greenfields Primary School

Greenfields Primary School has long taken a flexible, child-centred approach to uniform for pupils with SEND, often allowing adaptations such as softer clothing or alternative footwear. However, this flexibility was not clearly reflected in the written policy, leaving some parent carers unsure whether adaptations were officially permitted and hesitant to request them.

Coproduction Approach

To address this, Greenfields invited the parent carer community to work in coproduction on revising the uniform policy. The aim was to understand the barriers faced by SEND pupils and develop practical, inclusive solutions. A working party was formed with two parent carers representing the SEND community and the school's SENDCo, Helen Thorpe. Together, they shaped proposed adaptations and ensured SEND family experiences informed the new policy.



Challenge

The school sought a policy that:

- clearly communicates that sensory-based adaptations are supported
- prevents pupils without sensory needs from wearing casual clothing
- avoids SEND pupils feeling singled out or visually different

Parent Carer Feedback

Parent Carers highlighted several sensory barriers: tight cuffs and collars on the branded jumper, stiff material, and discomfort that led some children to avoid wearing a jumper even in cold weather. Others wore uncomfortable items to avoid standing out. Preferred alternatives included softer or V-neck jumpers, zip-up layers, leggings with socks, and more flexible footwear. Parents also suggested sew-on school patches for non-branded items to maintain a consistent look.

School Response

Greenfields will revise the policy to explicitly support sensory adaptations, encourage direct conversations with families, and maintain a consistent school identity while prioritising comfort and inclusion.

Case Study: Albrighton Primary School - Behind the Mask: What Coproduction Reveals About Anxiety

Albrighton Primary School identified anxiety and masking as a priority area for deeper understanding and improved support. To begin this work, SENDCo, Darren Green invited parent carers to participate in a collaborative discussion. Fifteen families responded to the initial letter, with eight attending the meeting.

All parent carers present agreed that their children masked in school. However, at first they struggled to articulate specific examples. Their children were described as:

- Well-behaved and conscientious in school
- Highly dysregulated at home, often without clear explanation
- Reluctant to seek help in school because they did not want to stand out
- Unable or unwilling to give specific reasons for their distress.

Parents explained that when children were given opportunities to speak with staff, they often declined or minimised their concerns. Their desire to conform and avoid attention made it difficult for adults to identify the root causes of their anxiety.

It was only through extended, open conversation with parent carers at the meeting that concrete examples began to emerge. This highlighted a key theme: masking makes needs harder to identify, and families themselves often cannot pinpoint the triggers without time, trust, and careful listening.

Emerging Themes From Discussion

As the conversation deepened, several patterns became clearer:

1. Difficulties With Change and Inconsistency

Some children became anxious when:

- Routines changed unexpectedly
- Rules were not followed consistently by peers
- Transitions were rushed or unclear

These disruptions, though seemingly small, created significant internal stress for children who masked their discomfort throughout the school day.

2. Physical Manifestations of Anxiety

Some pupils expressed anxiety through physical behaviours—such as skin-picking—without clear triggers. These behaviours were intermittent and often unnoticed in school, reinforcing the complexity of masked distress.

3. Sensory and Preference-Based Stressors
Parents described subtle but important preferences that their children did not express in school, such as:
• Strong preferences around food presentation and texture
• Limited accepted foods, leading to anxiety at lunchtime
• Heightened sensitivity to noise, crowds, and busy corridors

4. Clothing and Physical Comfort
One parent mentioned that their child had new school shoes but had been unable to wear them for three weeks. Each morning, the child changed their mind, saying the shoes were uncomfortable. The school was happy for the pupil to wear black trainers, but the child had not communicated this discomfort to staff.

These details helped the school build a more nuanced picture of what might be causing anxiety during the school day—especially when children were masking these needs in front of staff. If a child suppresses these needs in school, the effort to cope silently may contribute to anxiety or dysregulation.

This meeting illustrated that:

•There is no single explanation for masking, and no universal pattern
•Even parents may struggle to identify what is causing their child's stress in school
•Extended, empathetic conversations with parent carers can gradually reveal important insights
•Understanding home routines, preferences, and sensory needs can help schools anticipate and reduce anxiety triggers
•Building a fuller picture requires ongoing dialogue, not one-off meetings

Key Takeaway for Staff and Schools

The school are opening up conversations with families to learn more about things that the children share at home and the challenges they show. In SEN wellbeing meetings, parent carers and a member of the SEND team include discussions around behaviours at home. Darren is sharing feedback with staff who are being asked to consider when a child appears fine in school but struggles at home, to not assume everything is okay. He has also shared that when parents can't give clear reasons for their child's distress, it doesn't mean the distress isn't real.

The most effective way to understand a child who masks is through conversations with parent carers.
By learning about what helps a child at home — their routines, their preferences, their sensory needs — a picture can be built up of what might be causing anxiety in school. These insights allow the school to make small but meaningful adaptations that help children feel safer and more comfortable.

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Nursery: nursery@albrightonprimary.com
Headteacher: Karen Tearle

Dysregulation at home / Masking at school – Can You Help?

Iamwriting to youtodayto ask foryourhelp. We areseeing an increasing number of parents who are reporting their children showing significant levels of anxiety or dysregulation when at home. Most of these children are displaying little to no 'behaviours' at school, perhaps masking their anxieties and releasing them once they are in their safe space of home.

Does this sound familiar? Firstly, you are not alone. Secondly, we believe you, and we want to help. If this sounds like your family, or you are experiencing similar behaviours, we want to hear from you. We are forming a working group of parents to work together with us to discuss what your children need, and make sure school is doing all it can to effectively support you, your families and your children.

Ifyou'd like to be a part of this working group please email your details (name, email address and a short explanation of your situation) to SENDCO@albrightonprimary.com by Monday 26th January 2026.

We look forward to hearing from you and working together to meet the needs of all children, and their families, in our school community.

Kindest Regards,

Darren Green

Deputy Headteacher and SENDCo.

Case Study: Belvidere Primary School
Coproduced Approaches to Transition

Belvidere Primary School selected transition as the focus of its coproduction project with parent carers. Although the school already collaborated with the local secondary school and shared information between year groups, the SENDCo wanted to understand transition from a parent carer perspective. Transition had been highlighted by parent carers as a source of anxiety during the first year of PINS and the Headteacher and SENDCo were eager to explore this further.

Transition between year groups within primary school

After writing to all parent carers, the school formed a working group. In the meeting, parent carers shared experiences and practical suggestions. A key idea was a joint meeting involving the current and new class teacher alongside the parent carer. They felt this would prevent information being lost, reduce the need to repeat details each year, and help children settle more quickly. Parent carers also discussed using the meeting to co-create or update one-page profiles or care plans, and emphasised the value of wider staff awareness of these documents.



Compromise

The coproduction process also surfaced ideas that required compromise. One parent carer suggested involving all teachers in transition meetings, but following discussion accepted that this was not feasible given the number of pupils on the SEN register. The openness of the dialogue demonstrated trust and constructive collaboration.

Transition to secondary school

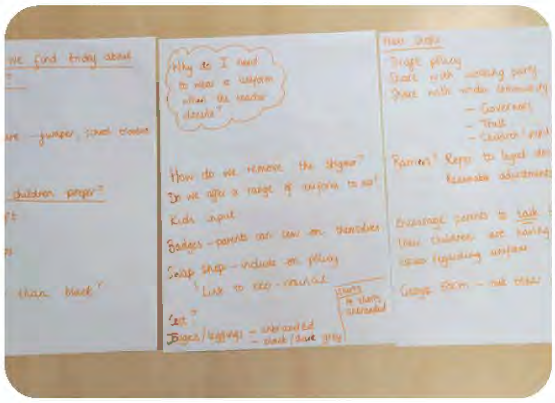
Parent carers expressed a desire for greater involvement in the transition to secondary school. They worried that the deep understanding held by primary staff might not transfer and felt unsure about SEND support in secondary settings. They said they would value meeting the secondary SENDCo directly as part of the handover process.

Case Study: Mount Pleasant Primary School
Shaping an Inclusive Uniform Policy



Mount Pleasant Primary School already had a notably flexible approach to uniform and leaders wanted to create a new policy that reflected this. With a growing number of pupils experiencing sensory challenges, the school wanted to create a uniform policy that was not only inclusive in principle but genuinely responsive to the lived experiences of its children and families. To achieve this, they invited parent carers to co-produce a new policy from the ground up — one that aligned with the latest government guidance while remaining bespoke to the needs of their community.

A Blank Page Approach



The Deputy Headteacher, Samantha Green, arrived at the first meeting with parent carers with a blank sheet of paper. This was a deliberate choice. Rather than revising an existing policy, the school wanted to start fresh, ensuring that every element was shaped through coproduction. Parent carers were encouraged to share both their own child's experiences and to consider the needs of families who could not attend.

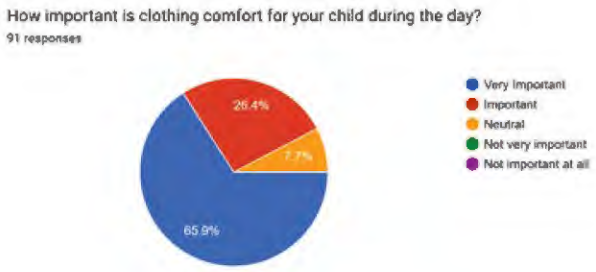
A clear theme emerged early: children want to feel part of their school community. Parent carers said that wearing a uniform with the school logo helped them feel included and connected. The challenge wasn't the idea of uniform — it was the feel of it.
Parent carers described how many children found the current jumpers and trousers stiff, tight, or uncomfortable. In contrast, the school's PE kit — made from lightweight, soft, breathable fabric — was widely preferred. Children who struggled with sensory processing often chose to wear PE kit whenever permitted because it felt easier on their skin and allowed them to move freely.

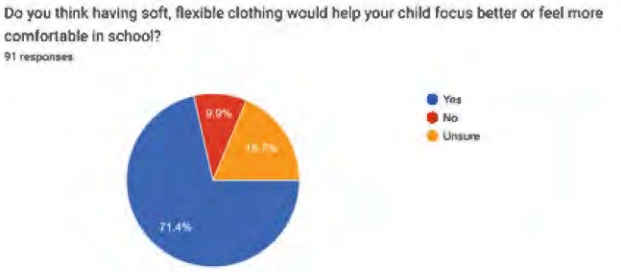
The group discussed how a more flexible, choice-based uniform — still branded, still recognisably "school uniform," but available in softer materials — could reduce the stigma sometimes experienced by children with sensory needs. When only a few children wear alternative clothing, they can feel singled out. When all children have options, difference becomes normalised.
Cost was also identified as a key consideration. Parent carers emphasised the importance of ensuring that any new uniform options remained affordable and accessible.

The Uniform Poll

At the meeting, it was discussed sending out a poll to all parents and parent carers to collect their views. The poll included 9 questions and having a tight focus on the topic resulted in 91 responses.

Poll Results





Parent carers suggested that gathering pupil voice would also be a valuable next step. Hearing directly from children — especially those with sensory differences — would help refine the draft policy and ensure it reflects their lived experiences.

"What's most important to us is that the children are in school. We do not want a uniform to be a barrier to this."
— A. Benge, Headteacher

A Policy That Welcomes Conversation

The working party agreed that the new policy should meet the sensory needs of the majority of pupils, while still allowing for personalised adaptations where needed. The school was clear that communication must remain open.

The policy will explicitly invite parent carers to discuss individual sensory needs with staff, reinforcing the school's commitment to partnership and inclusion.

Once the working party has met again to review the draft policy, it will be shared with the wider school community for consultation.

Parent Carer Feedback

Parent carers expressed that they felt genuinely valued and listened to throughout the process. One parent shared that a softer, more comfortable uniform would significantly reduce morning stress for their child, helping them start the day calmer and more settled — which, in turn, would make mornings less stressful for the whole family.



Case Study: St. Martins School - Stronger Transitions Through Shared Understanding

St Martins School, Shropshire's first 'all-through' setting for pupils aged 3 to 16, has been exploring new ways to improve transitions for children with SEND. The newly appointed Headteacher, Alison Pope, together with SEND leads Rachel Evans and Rachael Pritchard (EYFS/Primary), were keen to work in genuine coproduction with parent carers to rethink how transitions are planned and supported.

Like many schools, St Martins had previously found it challenging to secure strong parental attendance at parent carer events. However, by giving this meeting a clear, specific purpose, the school saw a marked increase in engagement. Parent carers were eager to attend, contribute, and shape the future of transition practice.

Although the initial focus was the transition from KS2 to KS3, the working group quickly broadened the conversation. Parent carers highlighted that daily transitions, as well as key stage moves such as EYFS to Year 1 and KS1 to KS2, were equally significant for many children.

The school team arrived with blank sheets of paper. They invited parent carers to "be brutal" and reassured them that they "wouldn't be defensive." This set the tone for an open, respectful, and solutions-focused discussion. Parent carers shared both positive and difficult experiences, and the school listened with openness. True to their word, staff received feedback without defensiveness and demonstrated a clear commitment to meaningful change.

Rethinking The Traditional 'Moving Up' Model

Parent carers and the school agreed that the current model of one or two 'moving up' days is insufficient for many children with SEND. Concerns centred on:

- Anxiety about new routines and environments
- Navigating unfamiliar classrooms, teachers, and expectations
- Practical worries, such as using busy toilets or managing lunch and breaktimes
- Staff not yet knowing the child well enough to anticipate needs or prevent dysregulation
- Communication.

A key suggestion was for receiving teachers to visit pupils in their current class for a lesson a week over half a term. This would allow teachers to build relationships in a familiar environment and reduce the intensity of change. While staffing and timetabling constraints make this challenging, the Headteacher expressed a desire to explore workable solutions.

Parent carers emphasised the importance of staff understanding children as individuals. Tools such as one-page profiles or "All About Me" documents—completed collaboratively by parent carers, pupils, and new teachers—were seen as valuable in supporting smoother transitions between classes and key stages. The importance of these being shared and read by all relevant staff, both teaching and support staff, was also emphasised.

Understanding the Whole Child

Toileting needs were raised as an issue that causes great anxiety for some children especially as they transition into KS3. Some children struggle to use toilets during busy breaktimes due to sensory overwhelm, leading them to avoid going altogether. Parent carers requested that pupils with identified needs be allowed to use a toilet pass during lessons. The Headteacher explained the wider challenges of lesson-time toilet use but was in agreement that this was something she wanted to address and acknowledged the importance of finding a balanced, inclusive approach.

Preparing for Events That May Heighten Anxiety

Parent carers asked for earlier notice of events that may disproportionately affect children with SEND. A recent lockdown drill was highlighted: while some pupils had been prepared in advance, others had not, and this inconsistency caused distress for some. Families expressed a desire for proactive communication so they can help prepare their children.

Sensory and Movement Needs

Concerns were raised about inconsistent understanding of sensory and movement needs across staff teams. Parent carers shared examples of children requiring:

- Heavy-work activities
- Sensory circuits
- Movement breaks
- Flexibility around lining up or sitting still

They stressed that lunchtime and breaktime supervisors, as well as teachers, need awareness of these needs and the signs that indicate a child is becoming dysregulated. Parent carers felt that stronger communication between staff teams—and between school and families—could prevent incidents of dysregulation.

The Central Role of Communication

Throughout the meeting, the theme of communication emerged repeatedly. Parent carers noted that where communication between school and families—and between staff teams internally—is strong, children's needs are better understood and better met. Consistency, clarity, and timely information were seen as essential foundations for successful transitions.

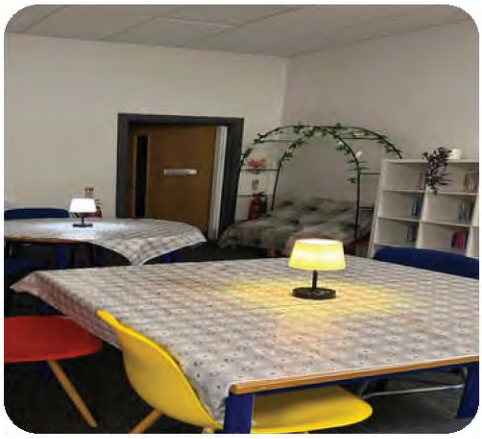
Continuing the Journey of Coproduction

Following the meeting, the Headteacher took the group's feedback and ideas to the school's strategic leadership meeting to help inform school wide planning. The working group will reconvene to discuss the transition plans which will be trialled as pupils move into the new academic year. In the Autumn term, once the new transition ideas have been trialled, the group can reconvene to evaluate the plan and adapt where needed.This ongoing cycle of listening, reflecting and testing new approaches reinforces the school's commitment to coproduction and to creating transition experiences that genuinely meet the needs of children with SEND.

Ellesmere Primary School
An Inclusive Classroom - Universal Approaches for Diverse Learners

Through the PINS project, Ellesmere Primary School demonstrated a strong commitment to adapting the school environment and practices to better meet the diverse needs of all children, particularly those requiring additional sensory and emotional regulation support.

The Headteacher and SENCo work closely with individual families to ensure each child's needs are met. One example involved supporting children with sensory sensitivities at lunchtimes. With 378 pupils eating in the dining hall over lunchtime, the atmosphere was overwhelming for some. By observing pupils and consulting with individual families, the school created quieter eating areas and implemented personalised adjustments to reduce sensory overload. These changes helped pupils remain emotionally regulated throughout the afternoon and after school. Through PINS, staff also undertook specialist training to support children with food sensitivities, ARFID and PICA, ensuring safe, consistent approaches across the school day.



Quiet areas for lunchtime.

Recognising the importance of the physical environment, the school conducted a comprehensive sensory audit across classrooms with an OT. This led to practical adaptations such as neutral colour schemes and hessian wall backing, creating calmer, less stimulating learning spaces. A pilot inclusive classroom introduced flexible seating, standing desks, low lighting and kneeling tables, shifting the focus from removing pupils for 'brain breaks' to embedding regulation within the classroom itself.



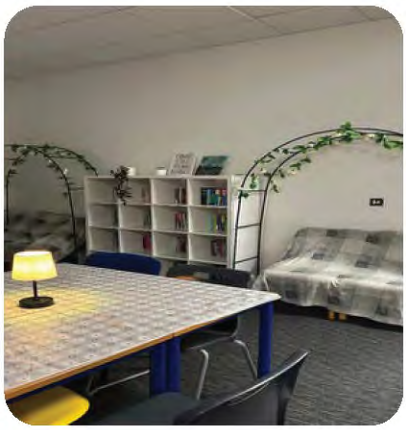




Year 3&4 inclusive classroom

To support pupils during unstructured times, the school established reading corridors - quiet, comforting spaces accessible during breaks and lunchtimes. These areas have reduced behavioural incidents and improved emotional regulation, contributing to a calmer school atmosphere. Staff report that children using these spaces appear happier, feel safer and are less overwhelmed, reflecting the school's nurturing ethos and the 'Ellesmere Way' championed by leadership.





Reading corridors and break-out spaces for quiet working.



Sofa seating within the inclusive classroom.

Staff training and reflective practice underpinned all adaptations, ensuring changes were embedded within teaching and pastoral strategies. Parents were kept informed and involved, with plans for an inclusion workshop to showcase classroom adaptations and strengthen engagement.

The project aligns with Ellesmere's vision of 'reaching for the stars' by opening pupils' eyes to a world of possibility. Lessons learned through PINS will inform future initiatives and policy development, reinforcing the school's commitment to nurturing every child's potential within a safe, inclusive and inspiring community.

Headteacher Nicola Bond's recommendations for other schools:

- Conduct sensory audits to identify environmental factors affecting pupil well-being.
- Establish flexible, adaptable classroom environments that support diverse learning and regulation needs.
- Create accessible quite spaces during breaks to reduce behavioural incidents and support emotional well-being.
- Prioritise strong home-school partnerships through ongoing dialogue with parent carers.
- Embed inclusion within whole-school policies and practices, ensuring staff receive training and time for monitoring and development.

Case Study: Burford CofE Primary School
Communication and Openness: Foundations for Partnership

At Burford Primary School, the impact of the PINS project was immediately visible. Parent carers described a noticeably calmer atmosphere and felt that positive changes were taking root across the school environment.

A half-termly meeting between the SENCo and parent carers has become a central feature of the school's approach. At the first meeting, the SENCo arrived with an empty page, signalling genuine openness to listening. Parent carers highlighted how much they valued the school's open-door culture, approachable staff and the headteacher's leadership in modelling transparent communication across the whole team. It was clear that the SENCo was able to work as she did because she was supported by the headteacher, whose commitment to openness created the conditions for this collaborative way of working to thrive.

The group identified areas where co-production could strengthen policy, with uniform initially emerging as a priority. Parent carers were keen to explore sensory-friendly adaptations to better meet the needs of some pupils.

At the same time, the school was developing a new SEN hub. Parent carers, whose children would be users of the space, spoke positively about being included in the consultation process, recognising that their lived experience complemented the school's educational expertise.

Relationships between families and staff were consistently described as a strength. Daily handovers at the classroom door provided informal opportunities to share concerns. Parent carers felt this simple practice made a significant difference to their relationships with staff and suggested it should be made more visible on the school website. They felt that new families may not be aware of the open-door policy, and that making it explicit could reduce anxiety and prevent unnecessary worry.



Parent carers also appreciated the school's acknowledgement of masking. The SENCo listens carefully to what families say about masking, as well as what children themselves share, and parent carers felt reassured that their experiences were believed and understood.

Strong internal communication further strengthened this culture of trust and partnership. At Burford, complex pupils are supported by a consistent team of three adults, ensuring continuity even when staff are absent. This stability helps children feel secure and enables staff to share information quickly and accurately. Learning plans are created collaboratively and shared with families in person, giving parent carers a clear understanding of their child's provision and the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to it.

Parent carers felt comfortable raising concerns, with one noting,

"It's all about the approach – I felt welcome, support is proactively offered."

"I try to teach in Class One as much as possible – which puts me in contact with new families."

This reflects the school's commitment to openness and relational practice. The SENDCo emphasised the importance of visibility and daily conversations in building trust:

Her empathy for the anxieties parent carers may feel when approaching school was evident. She described intentionally checking in with families through early-years teaching, meet-and-greets and regular informal contact:

"I know my parents really well … and go and check in on them. I used to be the reception teacher which helps."

Staff wellbeing was also prioritised. The SENDCo highlighted that being available to support all staff—not just teachers—boosted their confidence in working with families and responding to children's needs. The school promotes an emotional-coaching approach to behaviour, extending this to lunchtime staff to ensure consistency across the day. Alongside this, a programme of workshops is being developed based on what parents say they need, further embedding coproduction into everyday practice.

A new link with the Early Help Team means all parent carers will have access to additional support, including a planned parenting group. This strengthens the offer for families and reinforces the message that school and home are working together.

Burford's experience shows how openness, visibility and genuine partnership can create a culture where co-production thrives. Families feel understood, welcomed and involved, and staff feel equipped and supported. This relational foundation is what enables meaningful, sustained change for pupils.



Preparing for the Future: Coproduction and the SEND Reforms

These case studies demonstrate that coproduction thrives where relationships are nurtured and communication is prioritised—principles that sit at the heart of the new SEND Reforms. The work undertaken through PINS offers a clear model for how schools can meet the ambitions of the reforms and strengthen support for neurodivergent pupils. The journey does not end here; it continues in every conversation, every shared decision and every commitment to working alongside families. Together, schools and parent carers can build environments where all children feel understood, supported and able to flourish.

Across Shropshire, PINS schools have worked hard to break down barriers and build genuine partnerships with parent carers. This aligns closely with the reforms' emphasis on early identification, strong family relationships and consistent national standards. Where time, trust and resources have been invested, coproduction has moved from a concept to a lived practice—one that can reshape school culture and help schools prepare for the expectations of the new SEND system.

Feedback from parent carers has been overwhelmingly positive. Families report feeling heard and understood, which has reduced anxiety and strengthened relationships with school. As communication has improved, staff confidence has grown. These case studies represent the beginning of a coproduction journey—one that many schools are now ready to build on as the SEND Reforms reshape expectations and practice across the country.

The greatest impact has been seen in schools where headteachers and senior leadership teams have embraced PINS and empowered SENDCos to be vulnerable, take risks and implement meaningful change. Parent carers' lived experience has been invaluable in helping schools understand needs more deeply, respond more confidently and strengthen trust with families—exactly the kind of partnership working the SEND Reforms seek to embed nationally.

We hope these examples inspire you to explore new opportunities for coproduction in your own setting. Starting small has proven to be an effective way for schools to gain experience, develop confidence and embed this approach into everyday practice—an approach fully aligned with the reforms' focus on early, proactive support. PACC will continue to support schools and encourages sharing this work across MATs, Foundations and clusters. We welcome ongoing contact and are keen to add further case studies in the future.

As the SEND Reforms progress, the work developed through PINS is more relevant than ever. The projects showcased here offer a practical model for how schools can meet the ambitions of the reforms and improve education for neurodivergent pupils. Coproduction is not an additional task; it is a way of working that strengthens communities, builds trust and ensures every child feels understood and supported.

Appendix i

Understanding How to Coproduce with Parent Carers

Core Principle	Accountability Framework	Expectations of schools	How can I achieve it?
Participation in Decision-Making: Parents must be actively involved in identifying needs, planning provision, and reviewing progress. (Individual Coproduction)	SEN Code of Practice	Ensure parent carers are involved in all stages of the SEND process, including assessments, planning, and reviews. Ensure that parent carers are listened to and believed from the outset. Presentations at school and home, may be very different due to masking. Provide clear, accessible information about SEND provision and support available. Maintain regular, open communication with parent carers through meetings, reports, and informal updates. Respect and respond to parental concerns and feedback in a timely and constructive manner. Support parent carers in accessing independent advice and advocacy services when needed. See Parent Carers as partners who can support the effectiveness of the school and how it operates.	Inclusion is not just about access, but about equity, support, and meaningful engagement for all learners. Expectations There is a SENCO who has completed the statutory training (NASENCO/NPQSENCO) and is part of the leadership team. SEND should be embedded in whole-school decision-making, not siloed. SENCOs are expected to be strategic, contributing to strategic planning and staff development. All teachers know that they are teachers of SEND and should carry out the operational expectations. Listen to parent carers from the outset. Their concerns are real. Believe what they say. When making referrals record what parent carers experience and record it as their viewpoint. It is up to specialists to diagnose. Pupils with SEND and their parent carers are welcomed as part of the whole school community. There is a culture of early identification, using robust assessment processes to inform the Assess–Plan–Do–Review cycle
Respect and Collaboration: Professionals should work in genuine partnership with parents, valuing their expertise and knowledge of their child. (Individual Coproduction	SEN Code of Practice		
Parent Carer Forums: Schools and local authorities should engage with Parent Carer Forums to shape services and strategic planning. PODS(T&W) PACC(Shropshire) (Operational & Strategic Coproduction)	SEN Code of Practice		

Core Principle	Accountability Framework	Expectations of schools	How can I achieve it?
Impartial Information, Advice and Support: Parents must have access to independent support services to help them understand their rights and navigate the SEND system(IASS) https://www.telfordsendiass.org.uk/ https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/the-send-local-offer/support-for-parent-carers/send-information-advice-and-support-service-sendiass/	SEN Code of Practice	Behaviour as communication: The Code encourages professionals to consider what a child or young person might be trying to communicate through their behaviour. This is especially important when verbal communication is limited or impaired. Understanding underlying needs: It stresses the importance of identifying and addressing the underlying causes of behaviour, rather than focusing solely on the behaviour itself. This might include unmet emotional needs, sensory sensitivities, or difficulties with understanding or expressing language. Holistic approach to support: Schools and settings are advised to take a holistic view of the child, working closely with families and using a graduated approach to assess, plan, do, and review support strategies. Inclusive practice: The Code promotes inclusive education and the use of reasonable adjustments to support positive behaviour and engagement in learning.	Be prepared to do things differently, try something to see if it works Schools should adapt the physical environment, promote belonging, and support wellbeing for SEND pupils. Adapt the curriculum Is the child taught by a qualified teacher? Is the child accessing abroad and balanced curriculum? Are there high expectations for all pupils and their outcomes from their starting points? Have physical and sensory needs been identified and addressed through adaptations? Are there readiness to learn strategies in place, such as soft starts, welcoming by a familiar adult, an engagement/physical or sensory activity Are there visual timetables in place and used consistently? Are visuals in place to support all learning-with a consistent approach such as Widget? Can pupils access the resources they need, including manipulatives and visuals?
Joint Commissioning and Planning: Parent carers should be involved in joint commissioning arrangements across education, health, and social care. (Operational and Strategic Coproduction)	SEN Code of Practice		
Greater Choice and Control: The Code encourages personalisation, giving parent carers more say over the type and delivery of support, including access to Personal Budgets. (Individual Coproduction)			

Core Principle	Accountability Framework	Expectations of schools	How can I achieve it?
All behaviour is communication	SEN Code of Practice	Parent Carers know their children best and should be fully involved in decisions about support. This includes understanding how home circumstances may influence a child's behaviour, learning, or well-being at school. In sections addressing SEMH needs, the Code highlights that external factors such as family circumstances can influence behaviour and emotional well-being, and schools should consider these when planning support. Schools to take a holistic view of the child or young person, acknowledging that educational, emotional, and social development are interconnected across home and school environments. The Code promotes co-production—a collaborative approach where families and professionals work together to plan and review support. This ensures that both home and school perspectives are valued and integrated. The "assess, plan, do, review" cycle encourages schools to gather information from families as part of understanding the child's needs and evaluating the impact of interventions. During key transitions (e.g., starting school, moving between settings), the Code advises that home and school work closely together to ensure consistency and reduce anxiety for the child.	Use the progression documents (T&W) to baseline the child and understand their starting point. Consider the needs of individual Parent Carers and how engagement might need to be adjusted to meet these and to support coproduction to happen Co-producing with parent carers. Use person-centered approaches in meetings and planning sessions, start from scratch rather than preparing everything in advance and presenting it to parent carers. Have a separate meeting for parent carers of pupils with SEND, over several weeks, with each class teacher taking responsibility for the children in their class, to meet with parent carers. Staff meeting time could be provided for this. Engage Parent Carers at an individual and operational / strategic level. Consider how school policies and processes impact SEND families. When meeting to review EHCP/APDR, ensure the child is seen holistically and their interests are considered. Work with parent carers to set objectives that target all areas of their life and not just school. Collect the voice of the child. What do they want to achieve? What is a key objective for parent carers at home? Do you include these on the plan?
Accepting that school impacts home and home impacts on school	SEN Code of Practice		
The SEND Code of Practice encourages the use of clear, accessible language and cautions against overuse of acronyms or jargon that may confuse parents, carers, and young people. It emphasizes the importance of effective communication in fostering collaboration and understanding.	SEN Code of Practice		
High Expectations Are expectations consistently high for all pupils, including those facing disadvantage or additional needs?	OFSTED Framework 2025 SEND is now a standalone category in school inspections. Schools cannot receive a high rating if their SEND provision is inadequate.		

Core Principle	Accountability Framework	Expectations of schools	How can I achieve it?
Early and Accurate Assessment Is there a culture of identifying needs early and accurately? Effective Planning and Review Is there a continuous cycle of planning, action, and review to reduce barriers? Use of Specialists Are external professionals involved when needed to support development? Pupil Premium Strategy Is the strategy evidence-based, well thought through, and responsive to challenges? Collaborative Working Are pupils, parents, professionals, and staff meaningfully involved in decisions? (Individual, operational and strategic Coproduction)		Clarity and accessibility: The Code states that communication with parents and young people should be clear, straightforward, and jargon-free. This is vital to ensure that families can fully engage with decisions about support and provision. Avoiding unnecessary acronyms: While acronyms like EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) or SEN (Special Educational Needs) are common, the Code advises professionals to explain terms clearly and avoid assuming that families understand them. Respect for personal language preferences: The Code acknowledges that preferred terminology can vary, especially when referring to diagnoses or conditions. It encourages sensitivity to how individuals choose to describe themselves. Inclusive communication: Local authorities, schools, and health services are expected to provide information in formats that are accessible to all families, including those with language or literacy barriers. This may include translated materials, visual aids, or simplified explanations. Glossaries and support tools: Many local SEND services offer glossaries to help families decode common acronyms and terms. These resources support the Code's aim of empowering parents and carers to participate confidently in the SEND process. Practical Implications: • Professionals should introduce and explain acronyms when first used in meetings or documents. • Written reports and plans should be free from technical language unless it's clearly defined. • Families should feel comfortable asking for clarification without fear of being dismissed.	Communication Ensure that SEND is celebrated and included in every newsletter. Offer flexible meeting times and formats to accommodate parent availability. This might be via TEAMS if they have work/childcare commitments Provide interpreters or translated materials where needed. Document and follow up on agreed actions from meetings with parents. Equity Are pupils with SEND actively encouraged to attend after school clubs? Are pupils with SEND always included on educational visits? Support for parent carers Encourage parent participation in school events and SEND forums – PODS/PACC/IASS Invite PACC/PODS to attend parents' evenings and/or school events Schools should engage with external specialists and work collaboratively with parents and carers to co-produce support plans If you're working with families or writing SEND documentation, it's a good idea to include a glossary or offer verbal explanations of key terms. You can explore a helpful SEND glossary from Family Action

Core Principle	Accountability Framework	Expectations of schools	How can I achieve it?
Making adaptations to school uniform to meet pupil needs	Developing school uniform policy - GOV.UK 7th November 2025 Equality Act 2010 (reasonable adjustments for disabilities). Human Rights Act 1998 (wellbeing and dignity considerations).	Flexibility and Adjustments Governing boards are expected to review whether any uniform items could create challenges for pupils with SEND and consider: • Adaptations or alternatives to mitigate negative impacts. • Allowing more comfortable or less restrictive clothing. • Offering a range of options rather than a rigid set of items. Consultation and Co-production The guidance stresses working in partnership with families when developing or reviewing uniform policies, ensuring that SEND needs are properly represented. Comfort and Sensory Needs For pupils with sensory processing differences, schools should avoid fabrics, seams, or footwear that cause discomfort. The aim is to improve comfort, concentration, and inclusion.	Meet with the pupils and parent carers to discuss need and offer a range of options. Co-produce the policy with the pupil and parent carers to see what adaptations can be made Upskill leaders and staff on the policy and the positive impact uniform can have on self-regulation, reduce anxiety and make school accessible to pupils and their learning.
Participation in Decision-Making: Parents must be actively involved in identifying needs, planning provision, and reviewing progress. (Individual Coproduction)	SEN Code of Practice		

Appendix ii

Coproduction Audit

Please tell us about your experience of co-production in a school environment as a parent carer of a child with Special Educational Needs (SEND)

READ MORE

Tell us about your experiences as a parent carer

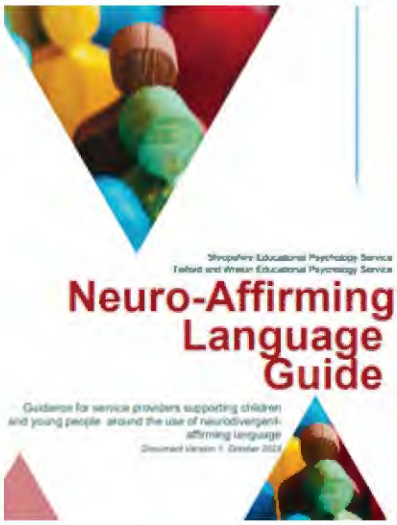
Your experience as a parent carer	Does this happen? Yes/No	How is this organised?
Do you understand the support that is available to you and your child?		
Do you understand what the support involves, who can access it and how long it takes to receive it?		
Do you understand what outcomes are possible from the support? Is there a contact provided for you to speak and direct questions to about the support, so that you can participate in decision making in an informed way?		
Do you feel listened to and have a sense of ownership about what happens to your child?		
Are you receiving support, and being asked about the experience of working with the school?		
Do you know how to raise concerns or provide positive feedback to the school?		
Are you given sufficient time and opportunity to co-produce support plans? Are you involved from the start of developing these plans		
Are you given opportunities to come together and share experiences with other parent carers?		
Are meetings with the school arranged with your input and held at a time that is convenient to you and your child?		
Are you aware of the resources that support your child's learning? Do you know how to use these beyond the school day?		

Coproduction Audit - click here to downloadable link

Your experience as a parent carer	Does this happen? Yes/No	How is this organised?
Does the school provide clear and easily accessible information about special education needs?		
Are there opportunities for you to inform what information is provided?		
Is information from school presented in the way that families / individuals have said works for them?		
Does the school ask for feedback from families / individuals on their experience of accessing the support that the school offers?		
Do you know how to provide feedback to the school?		
Is it clear how school responds to feedback from you?		
Does the school share feedback and its responses with the wider SEND community?		
On an annual basis is there an opportunity for you to participate in a review of the outcomes the school delivers for the SEND Community?		
Does the school share an annual review of delivery and outcomes with the SEND Community?		
Does the school have an established relationship with PACC? Have you been given information about PACC?		
Does the school have a parent carer / young person voice group?		

Appendix iii

Neuro-Affirming Language Guide



"Language around neurodiversity is evolving, and we appreciate that people may use a range of terms to describe themselves and others. It is important that we use language that people with lived experience have agreed is respectful, positive and inclusive.

Neuro-affirming language means using respectful, person-centred, strength-focused language that avoids reinforcing stereotypes and stigma around neurodiversity. It means listening to neurodivergent voices to guide our practice.

This guide has been developed with people with lived experience and neurodiversity professionals across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. It is a live document, which means it can be edited and added to as needed and as language practices continue to evolve."

CLICK HERE

Vocab Glossary



Sometimes we get stuck using words and acronyms that practitioners use daily, but we don't always understand them. To help families make sense of the jargon, we have created a glossary of the most frequently used words, acronyms, and terms that are not always so clear.

CLICK HERE

PINS

Celebrating every mind.
Connecting every learner.
Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin ICB

thank you!

Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools
PACC
Championing your voice

to the following schools for your hard work and commitment to PINS and working with parent carers to improve the school experience of children with SEND

PINS 2024-26

Albrighton Primary School
Belvidere Primary School
Buildwas Academy
Burford CofE Primary School
Christ Church CofE Primary School
Cleobury Mortimer Primary School
Clive CofE Primary School
Coleham Primary School
Greenfields Primary School
Longlands Primary School
Ludlow Primary School
Mount Pleasant Primary School
Shifnal Primary School
St. Andrews CofE Primary School
St. Martin's School 3-16
Stottesdon CofE Primary School
Wilfred Owen Primary School
West Felton CofE Primary School
Woodfiled Infants School
Woore Primary School

PINS 2025-26

Bryn Offa CE Primary School
Crowmoor Primary School
Ellesmere Primary School
Holy Trinity Primary School
Kinnerley CofE Primary School
Mereside CofE Primary School
Minsterley Primary School
Oakmeadow CofE Primary School
Radbrook Primary School
St. George's Junior School
St. Giles CE School
St. Mary's Bluecoat CofE Primary School
The Meadows Primary School
Weston Rhyn Primary School
Woodside Primary School

The success of this project is also due to the commitment to coproduction shown by the project team—Project Manager: Sian Deane; Project Support Officer: Sophia Ahmad; Jane Stephens and Uma Bhatia from PODs Telford; the Neurodevelopmental Practitioners from Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin; Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICB; and the PACC Shropshire team: Sarah Thomas and Simone Goward. Their shared dedication has enabled coproduction to flourish.



You can't make the right decisions without the right information!

Families deserve a real say in the **care** and **support** they receive—but too often, they're expected to **navigate** complex systems without clear, accessible **information**.

That's where we come in. PACC's **Community Navigator Service** provides the right information, at the right time, in the right way—so families can:

- ✓ **Understand their options**
- ✓ **Know where to go and who to speak to**
- ✓ **Understand how to navigate the Shropshire SEND System**

Because when families are informed, they're **empowered** to **shape support** that truly works for them.

"Abi signposted me to several different things that I didn't know anything about. Some for my children some for me. She has a vast knowledge of what our area offers and about the education system. Knowing she is an email away has been so helpful and reassuring."- Parent Carer Feedback

PACC Championing your voice
Parent Carer Council Shropshire

COMMUNITY FUND

PACC Championing your voice

Parent Carer Council Shropshire

Making Shropshire a great place for SEND families to thrive and have the same opportunities as everyone else.