

TRANSCRIPT: School: the learning environment

Alison, Jade's mother

If you've got foetal alcohol syndrome and you've got a profile like Jade's, you need to be educated in a small, quiet environment. Jade goes to a mainstream school but she is attached to the unit which is specially for children on the autistic spectrum but, ironically, because she's so bright, they make her go into mainstream and she's hardly ever in the unit.

Noise is always a huge issue. You can imagine going down a corridor and you've got a hundred kids with you, with the noises, to-ing and fro-ing, all the jostling, and then by the time you've got into the class you're well excited, and it takes forever to calm her down. She just can't concentrate. She's all over the place. Try then to say to her, 'Sit still, listen to the teacher, get your work out and write', it's impossible for her. So really, she needs to be in a small little box, facing a wall with no stimulation, no noise, and she'll get on with it.

Until very recently, she had twenty-nine different changes in one week of people that taught her and I don't know how many rooms, and it just was winding Jade up. So by the time she came home, her medication was almost finished and she was a bottle of pop. You only have to go 'boo' to her, she'll go in the door and its 'Whaaa!' and she'd just explode because there was nowhere else for this anger and inbuilt anxiety to go.