



Neuro-affirmative

Supporting behaviour is not about changing the person, conforming or being neuro-typical. We respect and celebrate difference and when behaviour is supported, it is always to support the student in their learning and for them to work towards achieving their best hopes. In knowing that behaviour is communication, we recognise the need to understand the student and their needs as part of a solution-focused process. Neuroaffirmation is seeing difference as an opportunity to listen, learn, adapt and evolve.

What does it mean to be neurodiversity affirmative?

“Neurodiversity means that we are all different in how we think, feel, and learn, because our brains process information differently. Your whole class is diverse, not just in the way you look or what you enjoy doing, but also in the way your brains work and how you think, feel, and learn.” (LEANS)

The human race is neurodiverse. We all have different preferences and needs and process things in different ways.

Neurotypical is the phrase sometimes used to describe the majority of people as it is thought they process information in a similar way. Systems and approaches are generally set up with neurotypical people in mind.

Neurodivergent is the phrase sometimes used to describe people who process information in a different way to the majority. This may include, but is not limited to, autistic people, people with ADHD, dyslexic people or people with a developmental language disorder, however, it is not diagnosis dependent.

The needs of neurotypical people are generally met as many systems have been set up by people with similar needs, whereas neurodivergent people may have different needs that haven't been considered. For example, a school uniform might have been decided for everyone, however some people wearing it might feel uncomfortable and find it hard to concentrate.

Neurodiversity affirming means considering the needs of all in decision making, ensuring that everyone is represented and that people who are not represented by the majority are consulted and understood.

Ways to be neurodiversity affirming in school:

- Respect communication preferences and understand that no one communication style is the 'right' one
- Reframe 'behaviours' and understand the difference and diversity of different neurotypes
- Consult widely with students before making decisions that affect them
- Be open to doing things differently so that you can open success up to all students and staff
- Embrace the wonderful opportunities that difference and variability brings to the school community
- Ensure that support does not come in the form of compliance based interventions, that students and parents/caregivers are part of the SET planning process and that targets are not set in a way that seeks to change the student
- Ensure that every student has the opportunity for success in all activities

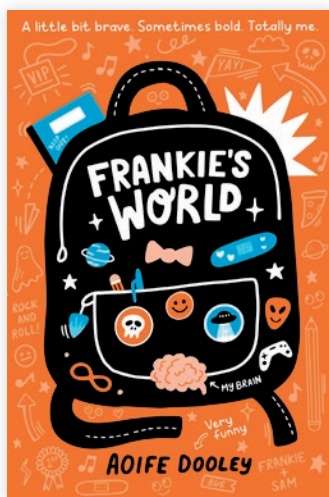
Resources and further reading



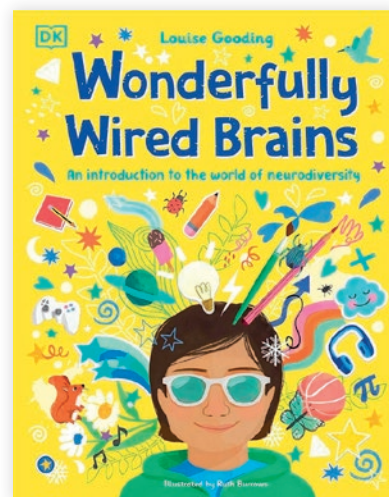
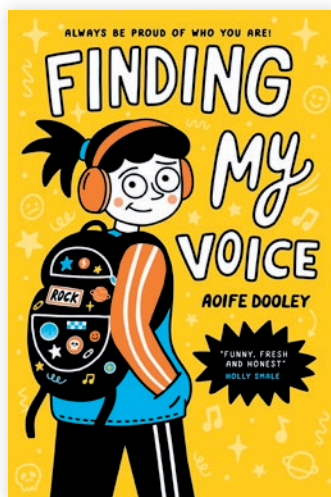
NEST (NEurodivergent peer Support Toolkit) is a free suite of materials to facilitate peer support for neurodivergent young people in mainstream post-primary schools.



LEANS: A free programme for mainstream primary schools to introduce students aged 8-11 to the concept of neurodiversity and how it impacts our experiences at school.



Frankie's World and Finding My Voice are two books about neurodiversity and the autistic experience by autistic author and illustrator, Aoife Dooley.



Wonderfully Wired Brains by Louise Gooding



Article from the British Psychological Society:
['Neurodiversity affirmative education: why and how?'](#)



[Middletown Centre for Autism with Sue Fletcher Watson](#)



[Neuro-affirmation in the Classroom with Sue Fletcher Watson](#)



[An Irish School's Neuro-affirmative Approach to Uniform](#)

NCSE TPL



[An Introduction to Autism](#)

[Understanding Social Differences – A Neuroaffirmative Approach](#)