
Fw: Axel

From Mrs Eccleston <j.eccleston@westlancspcss.lancs.sch.uk>

Date Tue 27/04/2021 16:14

To Alphonse Rudakubana: [DPA] Laetitia Muzayire [DPA]

Cc Maggie Allred <m.allred@westlancspcss.lancs.sch.uk>; Mrs Hodson <j.hodson@westlancspcss.lancs.sch.uk>

Dear Mr Rudakubana,

I have responded to your email addressing most of the points **below in your email in bold.**

In recent weeks you have:

- sent emails requesting information and staff have promptly responded with the requested information.
- telephoned staff at school, including me and you have had a prompt response at all times.
- spoken many times to Mrs Allred who has supported you to express your views about your son, which is reflective of a good working relationship.

The staff you liaise with at Acorns, have done their utmost to meet your wishes. Therefore, I am disappointed at some of the comments you have made directed towards staff, the statements you make in your email about those who attend, and about our school.

With this in mind, from now on my staff and I will only communicate with you whilst another adult is present, in order to safeguard staff.

In this instance, I have once again responded to you promptly. However, in future, as it is a very busy school, staff and I will not always be available to do this, but we will respond within a reasonable time frame. Again, that response will require an additional adult to be present.

Best wishes,

Jane

Remember - be kind to yourself and others

Jane Eccleston
Headteacher
The Acorns School
Ruff Lane
Ormskirk

[DPA]

<http://www.theacornsschool.co.uk>

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From: Alphonse Rudakubana; [DPA]
Sent: 27 April 2021 13:37
To: Mrs Eccleston <j.eccleston@westlancspcss.lancs.sch.uk>; Mrs Hodson <j.hodson@westlancspcss.lancs.sch.uk>; Maggie Allred <m.allred@westlancspcss.lancs.sch.uk>
Cc: Laetitia Muzayire; [DPA]
Subject: Axel

Dear Mrs Eccleston,

I am writing to highlight the following:

1. Why has Axel haven't started his Biology lesson this week? He told me that cooking and coding don't interest him any longer. So Biology should have started this week really. He is not learning anything new from school. So please make his education your priority because each day that passes is a day too many. We think that, if Biology is classroom based, it is enough for now plus the one on one lesson he has with Mrs Allred.

During our meeting on Friday 23rd with Kim Campbell from Sendiass also present, it was discussed that Axel liked computing and also had expressed that he wanted cooking lessons. We discussed biology also. We discussed that he had previously attended lessons with other students but did not like being with other students. This increased his anxiety and he refused to attend the lessons. It was agreed to build his timetable slowly. You agreed with everything discussed. It was explained that the changes would come into effect week commencing 3rd May to give time for Axel to process the changes.

2. I am increasingly concerned with the way the people in the care for Axel in school are communicating with him. You tend to forget that he is still a child and autism affects the way he talks, the when and the how he expresses himself. I am sure, as a referral centre you are by now aware of this. He is 14 but can communicate as a 5 years old. When an adult in the care of my child asks a probing questions/spy on him, I find it unacceptable.

During the meeting of 23rd April and prior to that meeting in numerous telephone conversations and email exchanges, you have never expressed any concerns about the way 'people' communicate with Axel. Staff who work with him are aware of the autism diagnosis. Your view that Axel communicates 'as 5 years old' does not accord with the view of staff who work with him at school. Indeed, we consider Axel to be very articulate and express himself adequately whilst in school.

Just imagine sending your 5 years old to school and teachers start asking questions that will make the child say inappropriate stuff. You know what I mean.

For example, Axel did not talk about conflicts in Northern Ireland or Israel - Palestine from nowhere. Simply reading news on the computer about a topical piece of news is not unusual. Mrs Allred must have asked him particular questions and as an adult and educationalist to make Axel comfortable and trusting enough to give his opinions and those nonsense "animatedly." As a result, you have told me that you referred my child to Prevent. He is not at any risk of becoming a

terrorist. Please refrain from extracting unnecessary opinions from my son, then take it out of context and do things that kill his character.

On Friday 23rd both Jan Lewis the Designated Safeguarding Lead and I, relayed our comments to you about Axel's interest and knowledge in the matters discussed. If you recall, I also gave you a copy of the report Mrs Allred made about the open website tab which ignited the discussion between Mrs Allred and Axel. We have a duty of care to share any concerns or information we consider that you need to be aware of. The concerns were shared because of prior concerns (also previously discussed) about Axel's interest in particular matters. Because there are historic concerns about Axel's web searches in school, the incidents relating to his prior exclusion and the serious incident following his exclusion (which took place at another school), it would have been negligent not to discuss these matters with you and not seek advice via the Prevent team. Both Mrs Lewis and I were very clear as to why we needed to discuss the report with you, and you appeared to accept that last Friday. You left school with the report and agreed to discuss it with Axel.

I am complaining that you, as a referral centre, you are abusing your duty of care for a vulnerable child that we placed in your care. Another example, yesterday I received a call from Mrs Allred that Axel told her that he tore the papers that the school gave me. I had sent a text message to Mrs Allred that clearly said the paper "was accidentally damaged." Why did she go around to ask him about it?! How do they find time to study Maths and English in one hour and gossip?!

The comment that '*you are abusing your duty of care for a vulnerable child that we placed in your care*' is a serious allegation to make. If you wish to make a complaint, then you will find the correct procedure to do that on our website. In the example you provide, I'm unsure how torn papers relates to the school or school staff abusing a duty of care. I can reassure you that we do not gossip with children, but we will have conversations and engage with children if they pose questions or make statements.

3. I am disappointed that no one at Acorns at any point in our meetings and phone calls ever mentioned that, in their professional view, Axel should rather go to a special education. I am asking myself why did you hold such important information? Yes lately after our previous review, I was told that Axel was not ready to go to any mainstream school. But no-one mentioned an alternative. I am disappointed because Axel has been at Acorns since November 2019 and you have known him very well that you should have suggested to his parents that his best destination was a special school. I had to find my revelation moment to figure it out myself. Likewise, if there any information or advice that might be useful to us, please share it with us. As a referral centre, you have been there, you know more that are good for Axel, tell us things we don't currently know and there are many. Do you have a copy of Axel's EHCP? If not why? Please let us know so that I send you a copy. We are supposed to work as a team!

During the meeting of the 23rd it was explained to you again by Mrs Hodson and me, that you made the request for Axel to be assessed by the local authority for an EHCP in 2020. We could not make the request at the time because Axel had not been with us that long and there was not enough evidence. You were supported in making that application by social workers assigned to work with your family at the time. In your advice to the local authority, you reflected that you desired a mainstream school for Axel, and this was reflected in the plan. In recent emails and discussions, you now desire specialist provision for him, and it was explained that there is a process via an annual review which is required to make any changes to the EHCP. Mrs Hodson has put that process in motion, and you are aware of this. All information has been shared with you; you have been sent copies of planning documents which relate directly to his EHCP, of which we have a copy. We would be unable to produce

those plans, send them to you by email and hand them to you in the meeting, if we did not have a copy.

4. I am concerned that while we are seeking to find Axel a special school to take him, Acorns is fault finding him and filing against him accusations that will potentially keep him at Acorns or harm his future. He made a mistake because of not being able to deal with bullies in the mainstream school. However, he should not be condemned to stay in a referral centre for an important part of his high school education, his GCSE. Axel is somebody's son and we are ready to get him out of Acorns's grip even if this means going to courts.

He should not be nurtured and schooled in such a way that he is destined to prisons or mental health institutions. No institution/school whatsoever, no teacher, man or woman would love Axel more than us, his parents. Therefore, take us seriously when we say that you have a duty of care to help find Axel a special school. That is what we are fighting for.

When we spoke to you last Friday, we said that we would support you in any way possible. This includes sharing with you any concerns that we have. I stressed to you, that if we did not discuss matters with you, then this would illustrate a lack of duty of care to your son and to other children in school. It was also explained to you that it was not in the schools or my remit to enable the transfer to a special school. It is the responsibility of the local authority to seek a placement if the EHCP plan is changed to reflect the need for a specialist placement. It was made clear to you - via us and by Kim - that your needs and Axels would be sought as part of the process. Your comment '*we are ready to get him out of Acorn's grip even if this means going to courts*' is unhelpful. Axel attends this school because of a permanent exclusion and when this occurs it is the local authority that places a child. Axel now has an EHCP seeking a mainstream school, which was what you wanted in your submissions to the authority. At this point in time, you want specialist provision and there is a process that you need to follow which you are now aware of because we have explained that to you in detail in a meeting supported by a representative from Sendiass.

5. You told me that Axel's views on transfer are as important in leaving Acorns. However, I disagree. Axel is 14 and has autism that affects his reasoning as compared to the majority of other 14 years old who are not on a spectrum . His views on education are distorted. As his parents, our views are the ones that overwhelmingly matter because we know better. It is not a democratic process where his views override ours. What we are requesting Acorns to do is to help him reason and ultimately do what is good for him, which is what we are fighting to achieve. You know that he cannot move on at Acorns.

Axel's views are very important in this process as he needs to find a school that he is able to attend regularly, enjoy working with peers and staff and have success. I am unable to comment further here.

6. Acorns represents the past that he wants to forget. Beside, as a referral centre, Acorns receives traumatised young people, often upset and disappointed that sitting down and learning is their last thing. This is why Axel has found it difficult to attend such classes in the past. However, Axel has been in the class before at Range High, full time for over two years. You know as much as we know that Axel does not need to prove himself or to Acorns any further that he is capable of being in a classroom with others. Of course he is. He would be able to attend when others in the classroom want to learn, something that Acorns is not equipped to assure its learners because of its very nature of being a referral centre. On the other hand, specialist schools are equipped to give that learning environment to Axel.

No further comments to add here.

I hope I have shared with you our parental position and objective. Axel must leave Acorns and start a new life in a special school of our choice. We will visit them with him, and please rather than using his reservations to derail this objective, assure him that it will be good for him. Visit special school with him to show that he will not be with young people who are too ill in the same class. Debunk these myths with him. Don't play on his fears and vulnerability. Don't record bad things about him. Record good things. Build him up. And please remember he is our son and, post Acorns, he has a life journey with us. And when all the dust has settled he will blame us (his parents) and himself for things which are not his fault. The decisions you are making on him and other children in your care now, will follow them for the rest of their lives but Acorns will not be anywhere to be seen. Axel is likely to be dependent on us (his parents) for the rest of his life as compared to his peers who are not on a spectrum. The stake is extremely high for us.

We understand that Axel's transfer is ultimately up to West Lancs DC/Lancashire Education Authority but what Acorns is doing in the meantime matters more. After all the Local Authority takes seriously what you report on Axel. You have unbelievable powers over his life.

As stated previously, in this email and in the meeting of 23rd April, we will support Axel - as we always have done - since he became a student at Acorns.

Thank you.

Alphonse