

Below is a shortened letter from a Teacher that you may have seen recently in the media. I hope that you take the time to read as it will give you a real insight into children's behavior.

Jack Newton
Executive Headteacher

Dear parent

I know you are worried. Every day your child comes home with a story about THAT child. The one who is always hitting\shoving\pinching\scratching, maybe even biting other children or swearing. The one who has to hold my hand in the hallway. The one who has a special spot on the carpet and sometimes sits on a chair rather than on the floor. The one who had to leave the building block area because "blocks are not for throwing". The one who climbed over the playground fence exactly as I was telling them to stop. The one who poured his neighbour's milk onto the floor in a fit of anger and on purpose while I was watching. And then, when I asked him to clean it up, he emptied the entire paper towel dispenser, on purpose, while I was watching. The one who used the REAL ACTUAL F word in PE.

I know you are worried that THAT child is detracting from your child's learning experience, that he takes up too much of my time and energy and that your child won't get his fair share. You're worried that THAT CHILD is really going to hurt someone someday and you are worried that "someone" might be your child. You are worried that your child is going to fall behind academically because I might not notice that he is struggling to hold a pencil.

I know.....and I am worried too.

You see, I worry all the time. About ALL of them.
I worry about your child's pencil grip,
And another child's letter sounds,
And that little tiny one's shyness,
And that other one's chronically empty lunch box.
I worry about Gavin's coat is not warm enough,
And that Sarah's dad yells at her for printing the letter "B" backwards.

Most of my car rides and showers are consumed with the worrying.

But I know you want to talk about THAT child. Because Sarah's backward "B"s are not going to give your child a black eye.

I want to talk about THAT child too, but there are so many things that I can't tell you:

- I can't tell you that she was adopted from an orphanage at 18 months
- I can't tell you that he is on an elimination diet for possible food allergies, and that he is therefore hungry ALL THE TIME.

- I can't tell you that her parents are in the middle of a horrendous divorce, and she has been staying with her grandma.
- I can't tell you that I am starting to worry that grandma drinks
- I can't tell you that his asthma medication makes him agitated.
- I can't tell you that her mom is a single parent and so the child is at school from the moment breakfast club starts until after school club finishes and then has a journey of 40 minutes to get home so she is getting less sleep than most adults.
- I can't tell you that he has been a witness to domestic violence.
- I can't tell you that the parents choose not to come to school to celebrate her achievements
- I can't tell you that his parents are struggling to know how to deal with his behavior at home

You understand that I can't share personal or family information. You just want to know what I am doing about THAT child's behavior:

- I can't tell you that she receives speech and language support and that an assessment showed a severe language delay which the therapist believes is linked to frustration about being unable to communicate.
- I can't tell you that I meet with his parents every week and that both of them usually cry at those meetings.
- I can't tell you that the child and I have a secret hand signal to tell me when she needs to sit by herself for a while.
- I can't tell you that he spends break time curled up in my lap because "it makes me feel better to hear your heart Teacher".
- I can't tell you that I have been meticulously tracking her aggressive incidents for three months and that she has dropped from five incidents a day to five incidents a week.
- I can't tell you that the school secretary has agreed that I can send him to the office to "help" when I can tell he needs a change of scenery.
- I can't tell you that I have stood up in a staff meeting and, with tears in my eyes BEGGED my colleagues to keep an extra close eye on her, to be kind to her even when they are frustrated that she just punched someone again.

The thing is, there are so many things that I can't tell you about THAT child.

- I can't tell you that his classroom job is to water the plants and that he cried with heartbreak when one of the plants died over the winter holiday.
- I can't tell you that she kisses her baby sister goodbye every morning and whispers "you are my sunshine" before mum pushes the pram away.
- I can't tell you that he knows more about thunderstorms than most meteorologists.
- I can't tell you that she often asks to help sharpen the pencils during playtime.
- I can't tell you that she strokes her best friend's hair at rest time.
- I can't tell you that when a classmate is crying, he rushes over with his favourite cuddly toy from the story corner.

The thing is, dear parent, that I can only talk to you about YOUR child....

- I will not share your personal family business with other parents in the classroom and I will communicate with you often, clearly and kindly.
- I will make sure there are tissues nearby at all our meetings and if you let me, I will hold

your hand when you cry.

- I will advocate for your child and family to receive the highest quality of specialist services and I will cooperate with those professionals to the fullest possible extent.
- I will make sure your child gets extra love and affection when she needs it most.
- I will be a voice for your child in our school community
- I will, no matter what happens, continue to look for, and to find, the good, amazing, special and wonderful things about your child.
- I will remind him and your of those things, over and over again.

And when another parent comes to me with concerns about YOUR child.....

I will tell them all of this, all over again.

With so much love

Teacher.