**Illustrations of Practice: Creating safe spaces for children at primary schools**

Where we are now currently is the Green Zone space, a space that we developed earlier on last year.

This space arose from a need to create some reasonable adjustments for students out in the yard

who we found were just finding the yard quite overwhelming.

It's a retreat space for some of our students with additional

needs or any students that just want some time out from the yard.

We spoke to parents, we spoke to students, we looked at students when they were talking about

their triggers and their strategies and looked at how we could incorporate

everyone's ideas essentially. And we had a parent committee come in. A lot of

them are parents of students with additional needs at our school. We talked

about lighting and acoustics and colour and one of the general themes that came

out from everybody was that it needed to be spacious, so not have too much in it.

And it was quite tempting to get carried away with resource catalogues and just

buy everything. But, we wanted it to be a multi-purpose space that can be used for

mindfulness, for relaxation, for circle time, for movement. A lot of the

classrooms, you know, they're sort of jam-packed with tables and chairs and

equipment and it's a lot to negotiate and it's quite stimulating for some kids so

we really value the open space we have here.

Outside are other strategies we use.

We have our safe zones for students who need time-out which is individually determined

with that student. It's not necessarily one safe zone so every child runs to

that safe zone. It's determined with that child. We also have sensory gardens so

there's a lizard garden and a dinosaur garden. Children can actually go and play

in the mud and things like that and we also have a butterfly garden which is

sort of the more quiet time where they can sit and just play there so it's

really creating different sensory spaces, and a multitude of options for children out in the yard.

Last year I had a tent for one of my children and I had to position

that in a spot because that was a space where he would go; however

then you also need different places in your classroom for children who need sensory

input as in pressure. So you might have a wall or a space where they can lean

against or push against. It's really getting to know your

children and what their sensory needs are and then looking around your

classroom and to how you can cater for those needs.

We do have sensory tools in our classroom.

We use an elastic band which helps kids with low tone or low

muscle development to strengthen their core. They can either use it to stretch

it with their hands or they can use it on the chair to help stabilize them and

to develop those muscles whilst working. It can also be sensory feedback to

them too so any of the kids who need pressure or weight while they're working

it can help them to realign, refocus and get back to work much quicker. We also

have an eggy chair which helps kids with balance and again low tone so sitting up,

using their stomach muscles. It also provides a safe space for them to be in

because the edges are curved. So again if they need that sensory feedback then

that provides that so that they can keep focusing, keep learning, keep on track.