



## Masking

Masking is a coping strategy often used by neurodivergent individuals to conform to social norms and avoid negative reactions. Masking is often mistaken for just "fitting in," but for neurodivergent individuals, it is an intense, draining, and sometimes necessary, performance. Common behaviours can include over-preparing conversations, forcing eye contact, or mimicking others' mannerisms, suppressing stimming or camouflaging sensory needs and hiding genuine emotions.

At Totley All Saints we recognise that children's journeys towards authentic self-expression and social acceptance may be challenging. By validating masking efforts and creating safe spaces for authentic expression, we aim to develop a genuine confidence within children that comes from being truly known and accepted.

### Classroom strategies to support Masking:

1. Gentle and predictable routines.
2. Allow lots of time for transitions.
3. Physical accommodations that address sensory needs such as soft lighting, noise reduction, regulation activities, comfort items.
4. Permission to engage in self-regulating behaviours such as stimming, vocal sounds and discussions around special interests.
5. Recovery time built into daily schedules, particularly after demanding social or academic activities.
6. Access to quiet spaces with time to engage in special interests.
7. Permission to decompress without social demands.
8. Physical regulation activities.
9. Validation of experiences of feeling different, in different environments.
10. Recognition that 'good behaviour' doesn't always mean that a child is coping.