

Pathological Demand Avoidance - PDA

Supporting Students with Unique Needs at Our School

At our school, we embrace the diverse learning and behavioural needs of our students. One profile that may be seen in some children on the autism spectrum is **Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)**. We recognise that students with PDA require a tailored approach to help them thrive, both academically and socially.

What is PDA?

PDA is a profile that falls under the autism spectrum. It is characterised by a **high level of anxiety** and a **strong need to avoid everyday demands and expectations**, even those that are part of regular routines.

Children with PDA are not simply being defiant. Their need to avoid demands is often driven by a **feeling of being overwhelmed** and a desire to remain in control to reduce anxiety. As a result, they may:

- Avoid or resist requests using social strategies (e.g. distraction, negotiation, humour).
- Become anxious or distressed when they feel pressured.
- Seem oppositional or controlling, especially in structured environments.
- Show a need for flexibility, autonomy, and reduced expectations.

How We Support Students with PDA

We understand that every child is different, and our staff work closely with families to ensure we are meeting each child's individual needs. Our support strategies may include:

- Using **flexible teaching approaches** to reduce pressure and perceived demands.
- Offering **choices and collaborative problem-solving** to help students feel in control.
- Building strong, trusting relationships with students to reduce anxiety.
- Creating **individual learning and wellbeing plans**, in consultation with families and allied health professionals.
- Being responsive and understanding, rather than relying solely on traditional behaviour management approaches.

Working in Partnership with Families

Open communication between home and school is essential in supporting students with PDA. If you believe your child may have PDA characteristics, or if they have a diagnosis, we encourage you to connect with our **Wellbeing Team or Learning Support Staff**.

Together, we can work to create a positive, inclusive, and supportive learning environment for every child.

Further Information and Resources

For parents wanting to learn more about PDA, the following websites offer useful insights and support:

- [PDA Society \(UK\)](#)
- [Autism Connect – Australia](#)
- [Autism Spectrum Australia \(Aspect\)](#)

If you have any questions or would like to speak with a member of our wellbeing team, please contact the school office.