**This is St. Shelter's School**, home to pupils of all ages, shapes, sizes and types.

But even though it has so many different types, the school only teaches in one way.

You have to be good at reading, listening, concentrating and paying attention to get good grades.

- Read well
- Listen well
- Concentrate
- Pay attention

You have to read stuff from textbooks and listen carefully to the teacher to do well.

If you're good at reading and listening, you'll do very well in this school.

Even better, you may be seen as "smart". People may even look up to you.

But if you're not so good at it, well....

You might feel the opposite of "smart" every day in class. You might feel rather stupid.

You might worry about other people thinking you're stupid, and about your parents finding out.
Worse still, other children may actually see you as stupid – depending on how much you’re struggling.

This can lead to you feeling bad about yourself. In fact, in some schools like St. Shelter’s...

...it can even lead to bullying!

This is why some children in St. Shelter’s school may not put their hands up in class. They don’t want to draw this attention to themselves, or they may become a class clown...

...or even a bully themselves.

St. Shelter’s school means well, but like most schools it teaches in one particular way.

Anything to protect them from the unwanted attention and judgement of other pupils.

And when you only teach in one way, you’re bound to get winners and losers.
For example, if you have ADHD you might struggle with attention and hyperactivity during class.

Or Dyslexia, which can cause slow writing speeds and make reading and writing words particularly hard.

Kicking a ball, tying a shoelace, or even holding a pencil is trickier for someone with Dyspraxia.

Autism affects how someone experiences the world. It makes making friends harder and loud noises in a room difficult to cope with.

Tourette’s Syndrome (TS) can cause “tics”; impulses to make strange noises, shout, or even make nasty comments.

There are others too. Dyspraxia makes organising and processing information harder.

Dyscalculia is like Dyslexia but for numbers rather than words.

Depression is a mood disorder that can make you feel very down all the time.

An anxiety disorder can make you feel like you’re going mad and raise your blood pressure.

These mind conditions are all examples of what we call neurodiversity. 1 in 5 people in the world are neurodiverse, which is a lot!

They’re nothing to do with intelligence, but in school they might look like weirdness or stupidity.

All of these are not diseases. They are the way some people’s minds work.
School can be a very unhappy place for a lot of these people. Many just see them like there’s something “wrong” with them.

And unfortunately, even though we don’t want it to be true...

...sometimes you can be treated like there is something wrong with you.

But this isn’t a story about the negatives of pupils who have some form of neurodiversity.

Your maths has been appalling, Andy! I’m giving you extra homework tonight!

It’s about the great positives...

...and what neurodiversity can bring to a school if we try to understand it better.

Sgan’ not more extra maths homework...

Excuse me, Andy, is it?

Huh? Don’t touch me!

Sorry. I just couldn’t help but notice the teacher give you extra maths homework.

Yeah, well what’s it to you? Leave me alone, y—

Andy often tries to cover up his tics.

SH-FFFFF!! EM... CAN I HELP YOU?

I mean with the maths homework.

No! Just... mind your own business!

Fine. But as long as we do it privately so I don’t have to be seen with you.

I know just the place.

Really? You’d help me? But... why?

But I happen to be really good at maths.

So at lunchtime, Siena takes him to a secure place in the playground where she visits regularly.

She’s never told anyone else about it before.
SO WHEN FIGURING OUT HOW 5 + 8Y = 17, YOU JUST NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT “Y” MEANS...

ARE YOU LISTENING?

YOU EXPECT ME TO DO IT ALL FOR YOU, EH?

I THOUGHT THAT’S WHAT YOU WERE OFFERING, NO?

OH THIS?

FOOTBALL’S ONE OF THE FEW THINGS I’M REALLY GOOD AT.

YOU MEAN YOU’VE ALWAYS BEEN THAT GOOD?

WELL, NOT EXACTLY. I’VE PRACTICED LOT'S TOO, SINCE I WAS YOUNG.

BUT IT’S AN EASY THING TO PRACTICE, SINCE I ENJOY IT SO MUCH.

THAT’S THE SAME AS ME AND MATHS. I WASN’T SO GOOD AT IT WHEN I STARTED OUT.

WELL ONCE I UNDERSTOOD IT, I STARTED ENJOYING IT. BY ENJOYING IT, I FOUND OUT I WAS GOOD AT IT.

MULTIPLICATION
7 x 6 = 42

 REALLY? BUT YOU’RE, LIKE, TOP OF THE CLASS NOW.

7 x 6 = 42

WELL, IF YOU PUT IT LIKE THAT, I SUPPOSE I’VE GOT NO CHOICE.

THAT’S THE SPIRIT!

GUESS I’LL NEVER BE GOOD AT IT, SINCE I CAN’T IMAGINE EVER ENJOYING MATHS.

TEACH ME?

OF COURSE! I KNOW YOU CAN DO IT. I THINK YOU’RE SMART, AND I ASSURE YOU THIS MATHS ISN’T GOING TO DO ITSELF.

ONCE I TEACH YOU HOW TO DO IT, I’LL THEN TEACH YOU HOW TO ENJOY IT. SOUND FAIR?

WELL, IF YOU PUT IT LIKE THAT, I SUPPOSE I’VE GOT NO CHOICE.

10 MINUTES LATER...

THAT’S CORRECT! SEE? YOU GOT THE HANG OF IT IN LESS THAN 10 MINUTES.

DID YOU MEAN IT?

MEAN WHAT?

ABOUT YOU THINKING I’M SMART?

NOBODY’S EVER SAID THAT ABOUT ME BEFORE. THAT’S WHY I HANG OUT WITH THOSE BULLIES.

YOU DON’T HAVE PRETEND TO BE NICE TO ME — I KNOW THE TRUTH.

I’M NOT. I MEANT WHAT I SAID.

ONLY BECAUSE YOU’RE SUCH A GOOD TEACHER.
I think you’re smart because people who struggle in class in the way you do tend to be pretty smart.

What do you mean?

Because we’re all different... and because what makes one thing hard for me makes other things easier.

I have dyslexia, autism, and dyspraxia. In English class, social events and most sports games I look pretty stupid.

Just like you and football. I’ll bet not everyone can do that trick you did back there.

Heh-heh. You’re right; that’s just a little thing I invented myself.

You keep getting me better at maths, and I’ll get you better at football one day. Is that a deal?

Haha! Deal!

You know, you’re the first person to ever see this place of mine.

It’s where I come to cry where nobody can see me. After you guys have been bullying me.

I was gonna say: how long’ve you been coming here for and why?

I’m... I’m so sorry. I’m just afraid they’ll call me those things for my “tics” if I don’t join in,

Those sort of things are the ones that sting.

You mean making uncontrollable sounds or movements? Really repetitive thoughts?

Yeah, and now that I know it’s tourette’s that’s causing them, I don’t think it’s unusual at all. I don’t mind them.

But why are you so good at them and I’m not?
AND SO THE TWO BECOME FRIENDS THAT DAY, AND
AGREE TO MEET THE NEXT DAY AFTER SCHOOL TOO.

THEY ALSO THINK ABOUT WHO ELSE THEY CAN INVITE ALONG WHO HAS NEURODIVERSITY, LIKE THEM.

NEXT DAY...

CHARLOTTE? DID YOU SKIP ANOTHER HISTORY CLASS TODAY?

YEAH... PLEASE DON’T TELL THE TEACHERS — I’M HOPING THEY HAVEN’T NOTICED.

MY ADHD AND DEPRESSION MAKES MY CONCENTRATION TERRIBLE.

SO PAYING ATTENTION IN AN ALREADY BORING CLASS IS A BIT... STRESSFUL FOR ME.

WHAT I’M CRAVING TO DO IS ACTING, BUT THE SCHOOL DOESN’T DO LESSONS FOR IT.

IF WE COULD PERFORM THE HISTORY, CLASS WOULD BE SO MUCH EASIER, (AND FUN).

YOU KNOW, ME AND A FRIEND HAVE A LITTLE HANG-OUT GOING ON AFTER SCHOOL.

I THINK YOU MIGHT ENJOY IT, AND EVEN FIND IT HELPFUL.

"SIGH" ANOTHER DETENTION, AND ALL FOR DOING BADLY AT MY SPELLING TESTS.

I HAVE TO WRESTLE WITH ADHD, AUTISM AND DYSLEXIA ALL AT ONCE WHILE DOING THE TEST!

AND NOW I’M GOING TO MISS THE GOLF ON TV, BECAUSE I’M STUCK HERE.

THE INJUSTICE OF THIS IS DRIVING ME NUTS!

NOBODY ELSE IN CLASS DOES.

CRUMPLE

CRUMPLE

Driving...?
Heh, if I can't go to the golf because of detention, I'm bringing the golf to detention.

But when he takes a shot...

Ouch!

Uh-oh, if that was Mr. Torres the caretaker then it's a second detention for me.

Worse! It's Andy the bully! Are his gang hanging out in those trees?

That shot was amazing, Josh! Was almost worth the bump. Fancy joining me, Siena and Charlotte for some fun?

You and Siena? Er, um... sure! Beats detention.

Meanwhile, in the school library...

Why are you always glued to the computer, weirdo?

Leave me alone! Please!

Gonna start wondering around again, like you do in class?

I think he's too distracted to hear us.

Because of his anxiety, Marcus is more exclusive than Josh and Charlotte.

Marcus knows what he likes and prefers not to be disrupted.

He loves computers and loves to spend time on them in the library.

Unfortunately, this is where the bullies also hang out after school.

Maybe we should yank out his memory stick.

Please! No!

Haha! I love his reactions.

He's like our own little nerdy stress ball.

Haahahaha!

"Computer Nerd"? At least I know how they work! I'll show them...

A "Nerdball".
MEANWHILE, IN THEIR PLAYGROUND HIDEOUT SPACE...

WOW, I DIDN’T REALISE HOW MUCH CONCENTRATION THIS TOOK. YOU’RE ACTUALLY DOING OK, JUST FOCUS ON THE BALL AND NOT YOUR BODY.

I THINK WE SHOULD DO THIS EVERY DAY AFTER SCHOOL. IT’S SO MUCH MORE FUN THAN SCHOOL ITSELF.

THAT’S RIGHT. AND THIS AWESOME PLACE YOU’VE FOUND IS SO WELL HIDDEN!

SHOULD WE GIVE IT A CODENAME OR SOMETHING?

HOW ABOUT THE ‘UMBERLLA’? IT’S LIKE A KIND OF SHELTER FOR US TO BE OURSELVES IN.

YEAH! WHERE WE CAN INDULGE IN OUR LITTLE “SUPERPOWERS” LIKE YOUR FOOTBALL, ANDY.

CHARLOTTE, WHAT ARE YOU GOOD AT?

MY SUPERPOWER? TAKE A SEAT AND I’LL JUST SHOW YOU.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE!

RUN AWAY, SIMBA. RUN AWAY, AND NEVER RETURN...

EXPECTO-PETRONUUM!

SHE’S... INCREDIBLE.

SHE’S THIS GOOD... AT THAT AGE...?

SHE’S GONNA BE A FAMOUS ACTOR ONE DAY....

BRAVO! I’VE NEVER SEEN ANYONE SO CONFIDENT!

Yeah, and the confidence to act out 17 different things on the spot.

Yeah well, I’m passionate about it so it’s easier to channel my ADHD into it.
EM, I… I’d rather not. I’ll look like a fool when you see how bad my shot is.

SIENA, PLEASE. WHY WOULD I JUDGE YOU FOR NOT BEING AS GOOD AS ME AT THIS?

“FINALLY”?

HAHA! FINALLY, YOUR FIRST LESSON.

BUT REMEMBER, I HAVE THE WORLD’S WORST HAND-EYE COORDINATION.

SIENA AND JOSH ARE ALREADY FRIENDS. HE’S BEEN TRYING TO CONVINCE HER TO LEARN GOLF FOR AGES.

“FINALLY”?

Em, we’re supposed to be doing things we’re good at, right?

IF YOU CAN TEACH ANDY TO DO MATHS…?

OH FINE, YOU’VE GOT ME THERE!

WOW… YOU’RE ON ADULT-LEVEL, JOSH! TO DO THAT, WITH JUST A CONKER…

IT’S EASY NOW YOU TRY!

EM, I… I’d rather not. I’ll look like a fool when you see how bad my shot is.

THAT ACTUALLY MAKES ME FEEL A BIT BETTER, THANKS. IF ONLY IT FELT LIKE THAT IN CLASS.

‘ATTA GIRL.

OH NO… HE JUST MADE FUN OF SIENA’S DYSLEXIA. SHE’S REALLY SENSITIVE ABOUT THAT

HAHAHA! WELL YOU’RE THE ONE IN DETENTION FOR BAD SPELLING, MISTER.

Huh? Why isn’t she upset?

The joke reminds them it’s just a bit of fun.

OH, HAHA!

IT ALSO HELPS THAT THEY’RE ALREADY FRIENDS.
WE USED TO CALL SIENA A "CRYBABY" WHEN WE TEASED HER.

IF JOSH HAD BEEN CRITICISING OR MOCKING SIENA FOR HER DYSLEXIA...

OH GOSH... ALL THOSE PEOPLE I'VE BEEN MEAN TO HAVE THE SAME FEARS AND FEELINGS I'VE GOT, AND AIN'T JUST EASILY UPSET.

I FEEL SO TERRIBLE.

BUT WHAT IF I HAVENT? I COULD HAVE BEEN BULLIED INSTEAD, WOULD OTHERS HAVE BULLIED ME TOO IF I DIDN'T LAUGH AT THEM FIRST?

...THEN IT WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT.

I’D OFTEN WONDERED.

BACK IN THE LIBRARY:

ANYBODY SEEN ANDY?

MAYBE HIS MUM PICKED HIM UP EARLY TODAY.

WHO CARES. LET’S JUST PLAY ON THE COMPUTERS UNTIL OUR OWN PARENTS ARRIVE.

DON’T YOU LOT GO CAUSING ANY MISCHIEF, WE SCHOOL LIBRARIANS HAVE EYES ON THE BACK OF OUR HEADS, YOU KNOW.

HUUH? I CAN’T LOGIN TO MY ACCOUNT.

ME NEITHER.

ME NEITHER!

YEAH, WHATEVER. I MEAN... OF COURSE.
I thought I said no mischief. There’s nothing wrong with the server – I can log in to my account just fine!

But we can’t log in to ours!

It’s like someone’s changed our passwords or something.

That’s just the sort of thing that computer need would know how to do!

When I get hold of him...

You’ll do nothing! I’m off to report this to the head teacher right away.

Head teacher, someone has hacked into the computer server and changed some passwords!

And I’ve just heard that Jasper, the school therapy dog, has gone missing!

I can’t find Marcus anywhere, ma’am!

He was in the library at least 15 minutes ago.

And Marcus is the only pupil who could hack into the school server. This can only mean one dreadful thing...

Marcus hacked into the server, took Jasper the therapy dog, and has now run away!!
MEANWHILE, SIENA AND FRIENDS SNEAK JOSH BACK INTO DETENTION.

YOU SURE YOU’LL BE ALRIGHT, JOSH?

YEAH, THE TEACHER ONLY COMES BACK AT THE END. WE’VE MADE IT WITH 2 MINUTES TO SPARE.

AHA! THERE YOU ARE!

(OH NO... DID THE TEACHER COME BACK WHILE I WAS AWAY AND TELL THE HEAD?)

HAVE YOU SEEN MARCUS ANYWHERE? WE FEAR HE MIGHT HAVE RUN AWAY.

GASP! RUN AWAY?!

POOR MARCUS. I BET HE’S BEEN UPSET BY THE BULLIES PICKING ON HIM AFTER SCHOOL.

I’LL GO AND FIND HIM. IT’S THE LEAST I CAN DO FOR BEING ONE OF THOSE BULLIES.

HE WON’T BE GOING ALONE, HEAD TEACHER. WE WANT TO GO WITH HIM.

IF HE’D BEEN PART OF OUR GANG, THIS WOULD NEVER HAVE HAPPENED.

NO, ANDY. I DON’T WANT ANOTHER PUPIL GETTING LOST.

WE UNDERSTAND WHAT MARCUS MUST BE FEELING RIGHT NOW.

WE’LL HAVE A BETTER CHANCE SEARCHING TOGETHER, TOO.

*SIGH* I SUPPOSE IN MARCUS’ EMOTIONAL STATE, IT WOULD BE WISE TO BRING FRIENDS ALONG INSTEAD OF MORE ADULTS.

BUT I’M COMING WITH YOU — YOU NEED AT LEAST ONE RESPONSIBLE ADULT WITH YOU.

I’LL MEET YOU BY THE FIELD GATE. IT’S BEEN LEFT OPEN, PRESUMABLY BY MARCUS.

SO THEY HEAD OFF TO THE GATE...

SO HOW ARE WE GOING TO FIND MARCUS?

AND HOW DO WE MAKE SURE WE BRING HIM BACK BEFORE HIS PARENTS ARRIVE—
YIKES! IT'S THE GANG!

THE BULLIES?

NO! DARN! L-L-LET'S GO A DIFFERENT ROUTE TO THE GATE.

WORRIED ABOUT BEING SEEN WITH US? ANDY, YOU KNOW WE'LL STICK UP FOR YOU.

SORRY, I'M... I'M NOT BRAVE ENOUGH TO FACE THEM YET.

CAN WE JUST TAKE A DIFFERENT ROUTE, PLEASE?

SURE, OKAY.

AT THE GATE:

RIGHT, WE NEED TO ACT QUICKLY, OKAY? THE SUN IS SETTING AND IT'LL BE DARK SOON.

WHAT'S MORE, HIS MUM COMES TO PICK HIM UP FROM SCHOOL IN 30 MINUTES.

WWithout a word, the gang springs into action.

Siena uses her maths and physics knowledge to calculate the amount of time they have before the sun sets.

Josh's supreme golfer's eye spies a thicket of trees not half a kilometre from where they are.

Since it's closest to the gate, Marcus could be hiding there.

Andy's keen football training gives him the energy to set the pace as they head towards the thicket.

Charlotte's booming actor's voice is used to call out to Marcus.

And the head teacher? She follows in astonishment at the superpowers these children possess, and how well they use them.
While they search, poor Marcus has ran deep into the woods with Jasper...

I... I think we're lost, Jasper. I'm getting scared.

But they started it! They're always laughing at me, those bullies!

But I hate being laughed at! I hate, hate, hate it!

Haha! That looked so silly, Jasper!

Heh-heh, well I guess that was pretty funny.

I suppose it's important to be able to laugh at myself a bit.

And look, you and I are still friends Jasper. Nothing would change that.

An angry reaction could have upset us both, if I was taking myself too seriously there.

Hey, that's not... I could have been...

But I still don't like the way those guys laugh at me.

They just laugh at me because of the way I am.
AND SO WHAT, HUH? SO WHAT IF I'M BETTER AT COMPUTERS THAN OTHER THINGS.

SHOULD I LAUGH AT ANYONE WHO'S NOT GOOD AT COMPUTERS?

NO! I DON'T WANT TO BE A BULLY.

BUT I'M NOT GOING TO CHANGE WHO I AM JUST SO I DON'T GET BULLIED EITHER.

GASP! IT'S THE BULLIES!

Rustle! Rustle!

I'LL BET THEY'VE COME TO GET ME BACK FOR CHANGING THEIR PASSWORDS.

YOU KNOW WHAT? LET THEM DO THEIR WORST. I'M NOT GOING TO BE AFRAID OF THEM JUST BECAUSE THEY DON'T LIKE ME.

BULLY ME IF YOU LIKE! I'M NOT SORRY FOR NOT BEING YOUR KIND OF NORMAL!

SORRY SIENA, I THOUGHT YOU WERE ONE OF THE BULLIES.

THAT'S QUITE ALRIGHT MARCUS, THAT'S A VERY INTERESTING THING YOU JUST SHOUTED.

YOUR LITTLE MONOLOGUE HELPED US FIND YOU, THANKS FOR MAKING IT LOUD.
Wait... that's one of the bullies there!

I know, Marcus, and I've come along to tell you how sorry I am.

Y-you are?

Yeah, I get upset too, you know. Because I can't stop myself doing or saying things sometimes.

But it's no excuse for hurting other people's feelings. I'm really sorry.

I heard you talking to yourself in the woods just there. It's given me a great idea for a school assembly.

An "assembly" you say?

Phew! You youngsters are hard to keep up with.

Marcus and Jasper! Thank goodness you're alright.

Head teacher?! You were worried about me? Not angry?

I'm sorry for all the trouble I've caused.

I guess I should be punished, huh?

Well, I'd say this whole experience today has been punishment enough, don't you?

I wish you were just as understanding when it came to my spelling...
MARCUS! I WOULD OFFICIALLY LIKE TO INVITE YOU INTO THE 'UMBRELLA GANG'. BEING PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE IS ALL IT TAKES TO JOIN!

REALLY? OUR OWN AFTER SCHOOL GANG? THAT SOUNDS AMAZING!

COME HERE YOU LOVELY DOLLS-- WOBBLY I MISSED YOU MOST OF ALL...

ON THEIR WAY BACK TO THE SCHOOL...

I HEARD YOU SAY YOU HAD AN IDEA FOR AN ASSEMBLY BACK THERE, CORRECT?

YES, ABOUT NEURODIVERSITY.

FOR BEING SO HELPFUL, I’LL LET YOU LEAD A SCHOOL ASSEMBLY LATER NEXT WEEK.

THAT WOULD BE WONDERFUL! THANK YOU, MS WATSON.

SO SIENA AND THE UMBRELLA GANG DISCUSS TOGETHER THEIR IDEAS OF WHAT THIS ASSEMBLY COULD BE LIKE.

SIENA SPENDS DAYS WRITING A SPEECH FOR THE ASSEMBLY, ANOTHER OF HER SUPERPOWERS IS PUBLIC SPEAKING, YOU SEE.

AND MARCUS HELPS HER PUT TOGETHER A POWERPOINT PRESENTATION TO GO WITH HER SPEECH.

LUNCHTIME THE FOLLOWING WEEK:

HOW’S THE PRESENTATION COMING ALONG?

NEARLY THERE! WE’RE JUST ADDING THE FINISHING TOUCHES.

MARCUS KNOWS HOW TO ADD ANYTHING I WANT IN THE POWERPOINT.
Hear that Marcus? You're a computed genius!

Ha ha — you've not seen the half of it yet.

There you are, Marcus! We've been waiting to catch you all week!

Trying to change our passwords again, I bet?

Andy, you're next unless you start hanging out with us again instead of these losers.

Stand aside, freaks. We're going to teach this twerp a lesson.

Well hanging out with these "losers" is 10x better than hanging out with kids who can only feel good about themselves by making others feel bad.

Wh-what did you just say? Andy, you can't be serious!

You're choosing them over us?

That's right, Marcus is my friend and you have to go through me to get to him.

We're his friend too, Andy's.

Which means you have to go through us too!

No... nobody makes a fool out of me... especially in front of my gang...

What Andy just did is braver than anything you guys have done in your lives.

Lorraine, stop!

That's too far!
NO! WE HAVEN'T SAVED!

PLINK!

TURNING OFF THE COMPUTER THAT WAY MIGHT CORRUPT THE DATA!

YOU THINK I CARE? STAY AND FEEL SORRY FOR THESE JERKS IF YOU LIKE. I'M OFF!

THE COMPUTER'S BACK ON, BUT THE DATA REALLY HAS BEEN CORRUPTED...

A WHOLE WEEK'S WORK GONE IN AN INSTANT, AND THE ASSEMBLY'S TOMORROW.

GUYS, RELAX. THIS MEMBER OF THE UMBRELLA GANG HAS THE SUPERPOWER OF COMPUTER SKILLS!

DATA IS RECOVERABLE. I'LL GET IT BACK FOR YOU IN NO TIME.

MARCUS, YOU'VE RECOVERED ALL THE DATA!

YOU REALLY ARE A GENIUS!

COME ON GUYS, LET'S... LET'S JUST GO.

WOW... LOOK AT HIM GO.
SORRY... FOR US NEARLY RUINING ALL YOUR HARD WORK LIKE THAT.

I'LL MAKE SURE THE SANG COME TO ASSEMBLY TOMORROW.

EVEN LORRAINE. SHE'S FEELING BAD ABOUT WHAT SHE DID, EVEN IF SHE WON'T ADMIT IT.

GOOD LUCK FOR TOMORROW.

NEXT DAY, SIENA'S ASSEMBLY IS READY TO BE PRESENTED BEFORE THE ENTIRE SCHOOL.

GOOD MORNING, PUPILS OF ST. SHELTER'S. I'M SIENA, AND BEHIND ME ARE JOSH, CHARLOTTE AND ANDY...

AND RUNNING OUR POWERPOINT PRESENTATION ON THE PROJECTOR IS MARCUS.

WE ARE THE UMBRELLA GANG, AND WE ALL SHARE ONE THING IN COMMON...

...WE ARE ALL NOT LIKE OTHER PUPILS. AT LEAST, NOT WHAT SOME MIGHT THINK IS "NORMAL".

I'M NOT SORRY FOR NOT BEING NORMAL.

WE ARE "NEURODIVERSE".

NEURODIVERSITY IS A TERM THAT RESPECTS THE DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH THE BRAIN CAN BE.

BUT BEING ONE OF THESE "DIFFERENT" BRAINS IS LIKE ALWAYS BEING IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY WHERE THE LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND WAY OF THINGS IS NEITHER NATURAL NOR EASY FOR YOU.

IT'S NOT EASY BEING DIFFERENT. IT MEANS YOU STAND OUT AND YOU MAY FEEL LIKE YOU DON'T BELONG, AND THAT PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO BE AROUND YOU.

BIG COMPANIES LIKE APPLE AND MICROSOFT ACTUALLY LOOK FOR PEOPLE WITH NEURODIVERSITY, VALUING THEIR DIFFERENT WAYS OF THINKING.
I've been bullied at school for most of my life. I've been judged and misunderstood.

It's hard to feel good about having dyslexia or ADHD...

...when school bases how smart you are on things you find difficult.

But now I've stopped pretending to be someone else and stopped apologising for who I am.

I've tried to be like someone else to not stick out from the crowd.

Instead, I gave myself permission to become who I was meant to be.

There are learning strategies that kids with neurodiversity can use to help them think like this too.

Here are just a few strategies that can help:

1. Use more pictures, so you don't need to rely on words alone.
2. Ask for more time to finish tasks and homework.
3. Use green pens rather than red when marking mistakes, and ask the teacher to do the same.
4. Executive functioning: Learn how to concentrate on a task and manage your distractions.

They don't cost money. Just simple awareness and practice.

But realising you're not dumb, and being proud of the differences that make you what you are....

If we can think like that, then maybe school can become a great place for everyone one day.

I'm not saying that school will transform overnight. My own transformation of accepting who I am was slow and gradual.

So where do we start making this change? Just be the best version of yourself, because there's only one of you and that is what makes you extraordinary.

She makes me think about my older brother.

If we can think like that, then maybe school can become a great place for everyone one day.

Thank you very much.

Maybe I can help my little sister with her homework.
VERY WELL SAID, SIENA!

AS SIENA SAID, THE TRANSFORMATION WASN’T OVERNIGHT, BUT OVER TIME, THE SCHOOL BEGAN TO HELP STUDENTS SHINE THROUGH THEIR SUPERPOWERS.

I ASSURE YOU I’LL MAKE THIS SCHOOL A BETTER PLACE FOR NEURODIVERSITY.

THEY ARE NOW UNDERSTOOD MORE IN CLASS.

PUPILS ARE HELPED RATHER THAN PUNISHED FOR THEIR STRUGGLES.

OTHERS ARE EDUCATED ON NEURODIVERSITY, INCLUDING THE TEACHERS.

CAN I RECITE THE HISTORY DATES WHILE MOVING AROUND, MR FRY?

OF COURSE! YOU CAN EVEN PERFORM THEM, IF YOU LIKE.

CAN YOU STAY BEHIND 10 MINUTES AFTER CLASS SO I CAN HELP YOU IMPROVE?

SURE, MRS WILLOUGHBY! MUCH BETTER THAN AN HOUR’S DETENTION!

BUT THE BEST PLACE OF ALL IN THIS SCHOOL FOR NEURODIVERSITY IS THE UMBRELLA, WHERE THE UMBRELLA GANG HANGOUT EVERY DAY AFTER SCHOOL.

EVERY DAY THEY GET TO PRACTICE BEING PROUD OF WHO THEY ARE.

ANDY’S LATE TODAY. ANYONE KNOW WHERE HE IS?

HUH?! HE’S BROUGHT THE BULLIES WITH HIM!

NO WAIT! LORRAINE HAS SOMETHING SHE WANTS TO SAY TO YOU ALL...

BEATS ME.

HAS HE... REJOINED THE BULLIES AGAIN?

...SO I THOUGHT IT MADE SENSE TO LET HER SAY IT HERE IN THE UMBRELLA.
I’m really sorry, for everything.

Could you... help me with my maths?

And my computing, Marcus?

Being better at golf would help me with my confidence.

Only teach us if you want to. We know we don’t deserve it.

Stevie told us your gang was started by you teaching him maths, Siena.

They all agree that this should be Marcus’ decision.

And so the umbrella gang helps a group of people who struggled with things that made them insecure.

And Marcus decides that forgiving them is much better than holding a grudge.

What’s become of St. Shelters School now? It has become an extraordinary school filled with normal children.

Soon enough, new friends are made where it wouldn’t have been imagined, thanks to the gang’s neurodiversity and superpowers.

Not because no children there are different from normal, but it sees it as normal for children to be different.
“I hope you have enjoyed reading about the lives and adventures of the Umbrella Gang. This group of young people who are all ‘neurodiverse’ and like many of you have ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia or Dyscalculia. We know that the five young people you have read about in this comic book story, all know what it is like because the characters are based on real young people. Charlotte, Andy, Marcus, Josh and Siena are all ‘Neurodiversity Ambassadors’ at the ADHD Foundation. Like you, the five members of the Umbrella Gang are exceptionally talented, intelligent and have achieved great things – even though they don’t always score an A grade. These five young people are outstanding in their work to help others understand that having a learning difference does not stop you from achieving your potential and accomplishing great things. In real life Charlotte is a successful actress, Josh is world champion sportsman in Golf, Siena is a genius at Maths and Marcus – well Marcus is amazing at so many things but especially computers!

Until the next edition of the comic when you will learn more about the Umbrella Gang, we wish you every success in all you do. Remember that having a brain that works differently is much in demand by many businesses – your brain can do things a computer can not do! Being neurodiverse makes you incredibly creative and intelligent in ways that are not always measured in school exams. You are gifted in so many ways. I am sure that every one of you who is reading this is amazing at something! I wish I had understood this better when I was at school. I was always forgetting things and I was often late for school in the mornings. It was difficult having ADHD as child but I didn’t let it stop me from working hard for what I wanted to achieve. I hope you have been inspired by the Umbrella Gang and I would like to hear about your amazing abilities. So if you want to share them, speak with you parents or teachers and ask them to contact me at the ADHD Foundation to tell me about your superpowers!”
Rossie Stone & Dekko Comics:

My name is Rossie Stone. I am dyslexic and struggled with school for most of my life, as well as finding it difficult to fit in. It was an honour for me and my team to write the story and do the art for this comic. The Umbrella Gang related quite personally to my own experiences at school, as it may to many other children and adults reading it. I’m excited to work on the next adventure Tony Lloyd has in store for this comic series... Stay tuned!

Dekko Comics is my company, and we turn school subjects like maths, English, history and more into comic stories so that they are easy and fun to read for everyone. If you’d like to find out more, or try some Dekko Comics for yourself, please visit our website at www.dekkocomics.com.
Do you find school difficult? Maybe you might even have dyslexia, autism, or some other form of neurodiversity. We invite you to read this comic story about five friends who help each other focus less on their school struggles and more on their “superpowers”.

www.adhdfoundation.org.uk