



PDA Factfile for both mainstream and SEN schools:

PDA - Pathological Demand Avoidance

Key characteristics of PDA:

- Extreme avoidance of ordinary demands
- Excessive moods swings
- Strong need for control in order to feel safe
- May have sensory sensitivities - bright light and noise

Strategies to help support:

- Use clear language
- Give extra processing time
- Use visuals with icons or pictures
- Offer a now and next board
- Offer choices to increase the sense of control (arts and crafts OR dodgeball) make sure the choices you give are both the adults options, staff still need to have control.
- Promote independence by giving small responsibilities
- Implement routine and predictable routines. Tell the class when the next activity is taking place, give a 5 minute countdown so that they are aware in advance of any changes.

How to support the child during a dysregulated period:

- Stay calm - remain a low and calm voice
- Remove demands and pressures
- Use a few words - don't overcomplicate or overwhelm.

Core PDA Strategies (PANDA Approach):

- P - Pick Battles: Focus only on essential safety demands, compromising on less important things like dress codes or mealtimes.
- A - Anxiety Management: Recognise triggers and create a low-arousal environment; calm communication is vital.
- N - Negotiation & Collaboration: Work with the individual, finding solutions together rather than imposing rules.
- D - Disguise & Manage Demands: Reframe requests as puzzles or games, use humor, and offer choices to give a sense of control (e.g., "How can we get this shopping in?" instead of "Take the shopping in").



- A - Adaptation: Be flexible and adjust plans when anxiety spikes.

Things to avoid:

- Traditional Rewards/Punishments: These often backfire as they highlight compliance/non-compliance and can increase anxiety.
- Direct Commands: Don ' t use phrases like ' you must or you need to' use language such as ' shall we'

Now and next board:

Use and laminate this to help process what is coming next.

Use visuals and a visual timetable.