



# FISHBOURNE CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL



Only one you



## SEND Newsletter

### Focus: Masking



### What is Masking?

Masking is a strategy used by some people, consciously or unconsciously, to blend in and be more accepted in society. Masking can happen in formal situations such as at school or work and in informal situations such as at home with family or socialising with friends. Research suggests some people learn how to mask by observing, analysing and mirroring the behaviours of others – in real life or on TV, in films, books, etc. People have described masking as: hyper-vigilance for and constant adaptation to the preferences and expectations (whether expressed, implied or anticipated) of the people around you or tightly controlling and adjusting how you express yourself (including your needs, preferences, opinions, interests, personality, mannerisms and appearance) based on the real or anticipated reactions of others, both in the moment and over time.

Videos explaining masking:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Tvzt2wTZHE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCLvsSfid-Q>

### Things to look out for:

Distressed behaviour, including meltdowns and/or shutdowns (often only expressed when it can't be held in any longer or when the individual feels safe enough in their environment to do so, such as when they get home from school), mental and physical exhaustion (which can lead to autistic burnout), mental health difficulties (including increased suicidality and/or self-harm), isolation and/or feeling disconnected from other people, being more vulnerable to abuse (if you 'blend in' by overriding your reactions and going along with what other people want, this may not keep you safe in certain situations, such as sexual interactions), a loss of sense of self and low self-esteem.

### Things you can do to support your child:

- Allow time to recover after social interactions due to the exhaustion associated with masking
- Share masking concerns with school so they can make appropriate accommodations and provide carefully planned individualised support
- Make professionals aware that they may mask during the diagnostic process
- If attending public spaces and events should aim to visit during quiet hours, areas of quiet spaces, relaxed screenings, etc.
- Help children to think about who they are behind the mask, what they like and dislike, and how and when they could unmask to better reflect their true interests, values, sensory profile and identity.

