

Good morning, thank you for inviting me to talk today in assembly.

My name is Daniel Bennison-Pauls and I am autistic. This doesn't define who I am but it is a part of me, just like it is a part of someone if they have ginger hair or are short or tall. It means that often I see the world from a different perspective than everyone else. Everyday things such as noises, smells and even people's faces appear differently to me than they would to you. I cannot really read facial expressions very well and find eye contact difficult at times. However, even if I'm not looking directly at people it doesn't mean I am being rude or not listening to them. Words often become a little jumbled to me and I need time to sort out what is being said to me and also what I want to say. I didn't speak properly until I was about 6 years old and 2-way conversation still at times is tricky and tires me out. However I do love to talk and am worth listening to... although get me onto one of my pet subjects like football or Liverpool and I run the risk of boring you!!! Remember I wouldn't recognise your glazed expression as boredom!!! I like routine and I am not keen on sudden unexpected changes during the day whether at home or school. Familiarity to me means safety. At Banovallum I had coping mechanisms to help me with the day and my former T.A Mrs. Nutt helped me cope with anything that was thrown at me. The teachers recognised my autism and helped me feel safe and a valued member of the school. During exams I had certain measures in place so that I could be quiet and calm and in a room of my own. So, as I said to begin with: my name is Daniel Bennison-Pauls and I am autistic. However, I journeyed through Banovallum safely and happily and went on to achieve excellent GCSE results. I am now studying A-Levels in Geography, French and Philosophy and Ethics at Branston Community Academy. I still have a T.A who helps me called Mr. Robson, but I have settled in well and I am enjoying the challenge of sixth form life. Please remember autistic people may need you to speak clearly and slowly, be a little less noisy around them and sometimes not touch them too much. But most of all we are individuals just as you all are, we have our own personalities and we are unique. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter what makes up your character, we are all together as one and all as important as each other. Different doesn't mean less, it's just different.