*The Neurodivergent Classroom*

# OCD at a Glance

With OCD, unpleasant thoughts or doubts keep pushing their way in. Rituals and reassurance ease the tension for a moment, but they can feed the cycle.



## What you may notice in class

- Tasks drag on because they keep checking or rewriting.
- Asks again and again, even though they know the answer.
- Routines have to happen in a set order.
- Rereads texts or repeats certain parts.
- Keeps re-sorting materials, files or their workspace.
- Transitions, handing in work or reading aloud get held up.
- Seems tense, worn out or far away.
- With younger kids, rituals, checking and transitions delay getting started. (elementary school)
- With older students, reassurance seeking, revising and test pressure delay finishing. (middle and high school)

## Strengths

- Can do strong subject work despite the strain of OCD.
- Short work chunks let their skills show.
- Their feedback helps you shape agreements that work.
- Clear learning goals help separate knowledge from distressing rituals.
- Can help set clear stopping points.

## What helps

- Answer a request for reassurance once, briefly and factually.
- Agree on clear time limits and a definite end to the work.
- Show tasks in visible steps and say what “done” looks like.
- Keep the learning goal separate from unneeded formalities.
- Address distress calmly and in private.
- Work as a team and stick to one agreed approach.
- Plan breaks with a set return point and next step.
- Check whether revisions really serve the learning goal.
- Coordinate school adjustments with the existing treatment plan.
- With younger kids, use visible end points and short work steps. (elementary school)
- With older students, agree on clear end times and work limits. (middle and high school)

## What tends not to help

- Allowing endless checking, erasing and rewriting.
- Reassuring them over and over.
- Shaming the student for slowness or rituals.
- Doing therapy or exposure exercises in class.

## Words that carry

“I’ll answer that once, and then we’ll keep going.”

“Today it’s about the learning, not making it perfect.”

“Okay, on to the next step we agreed on.”

“Let’s finish this step together and move on.” (elementary school)

“We’ve hit the limit we agreed on. Time to wrap up.” (middle and high school)

## Where to find support

**International OCD Foundation (IOCDF)**
iocdf.org
International nonprofit with information, a therapist directory and a site for kids and teens.

**OCD Action** ocdaction.org.uk
UK charity with a guide on OCD for school staff.

**NHS: Obsessive compulsive disorder**
nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd/overview
Clear health information from the UK National Health Service.

**Local support**
Many countries have OCD associations. Treatment is the job of mental health professionals; the school supports the agreed plan.

**More in the Teacher Portal:** neurodivergentclassroom.com/teacher-portal/ocd/

Sources: International OCD Foundation: Finding Help · NICE guideline CG31: Obsessive-compulsive disorder and body dysmorphic disorder · NIMH: Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder · AWMF S3 guideline on obsessive-compulsive disorders (in German) · AWMF S3 guideline on OCD in children and adolescents (in German)