

I was just a child. Twelve years old. I should have been safe. I should have been cared for. Instead, Woodlands School became a place that stole something from me that I have never been able to get back.

Every single day within those walls, I endured abuse. Physical abuse that left marks on my body, and mental abuse that carved itself even deeper into my mind. It came from the staff — the adults who were supposed to protect me — and from other children. There was nowhere to turn. No one to run to. I was completely alone in my suffering.

I remember being restrained. Held down by the hands of people who should have been keeping me safe. The force they used left me with a scar on my face that I still carry with me to this day. I see it every morning when I wake up. It is a permanent reminder of what was done to me as a helpless child, and it has quietly destroyed my confidence in ways that are impossible to fully put into words.

I was neglected. Abandoned by a system that was supposed to wrap its arms around me. Instead, it let me fall — and no one caught me.

I never got the chance to just be a child.

Now, as an adult, I carry all of it with me. Every single day I live with complex PTSD, crippling anxiety, and mental health struggles that have shaped every part of my life.

What happened to me back then didn't stay in the past — it followed me, it grew with me, and it still lives inside me now.

I was let down in the most profound way a child can be let down. And I deserved so much better.