



# Parent Partnership Service

Working with your child's school and  
with the Local Authority:

a parent's guide



## **Making a link with your child's school**

- ◆ **Find out who is the most appropriate person to contact about your child. This may vary according to why you need to contact them. For questions and concerns about your child's special educational needs (for example, about how much support they receive or how it is provided), the school SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator), class teacher or tutor may be the best person.**
- ◆ **Find out when and how it is best to contact school staff. The school secretary may be able to help you with this. Most school staff are not available to come to the telephone during the school day, but it may sometimes be possible to arrange a particular time to call to discuss an issue or concern.**
- ◆ **If you have a child in primary school and need to have frequent contact with the school, you may want to ask the school if a Home-School link book or diary would be useful. This enables you to send a brief note to school, and for school to send brief notes back to you.**
- ◆ **If you are worried that you are not being kept informed about events or meetings, you may want to check that letters and information sent by the school are reaching you. Some children find it difficult to remember to pass on letters they are given in school. Your class teacher or the school secretary will be able to let you know whether your child has been given letters to bring home. If this is a real problem for you, speak to the school about arranging a different way of communicating with you.**

## **Keeping school informed**

- ◆ **Let the school know about important developments in your child's life. These may include new medical diagnoses, the results of health investigations or tests; changes in family life which may have an effect on your child's behaviour or mood; new behaviours you have noticed at home and which you think may be important.**
- ◆ **Remember to let them know about the positive as well as the negative changes!**

## **Contacting the local authority**

- ◆ **The local authority (LA) may also be known as the LEA, the Education Department or Children & Young People's Services.**
- ◆ **You may need to get in touch with the local authority if you need to discuss your child's statement, or if you need to talk about a change of school. You may also want to get in touch with the local authority if you are requesting a statutory assessment.**
- ◆ **Letters from the local authority will have a contact name and telephone number on them. This is the best place to start. Before you telephone, make sure you are clear about what questions you want to ask. You will be asked for your child's name and date of birth when you call.**
- ◆ **If you prefer to write to the local authority, make sure you include your name, full address and telephone number. Also include your child's full name, their date of birth and the school they attend.**
- ◆ **You may want to ask to meet with an officer from the education office to discuss the contents of your child's statement, or your choice of school. Meetings will often take place at the Civic Offices (in Telford) or Shirehall (in Shropshire). However, if it is difficult for you to travel to the local authority offices, you may want to ask if it is possible to meet at your home or at your child's school.**

## **Keeping track**

- ◆ **You are likely to collect a large amount of paperwork relating to your child. It is helpful if you can keep this in one place, and, if possible, in date order. A loose leaf folder is useful for this. You may need more than one!**
- ◆ **Keep a note of the names, roles and contact details of professionals who are involved with your child.**
- ◆ **If you have a telephone conversation with a professional, make notes at the time or immediately afterwards to remind you of what was said.**
- ◆ **If you attend a meeting, take brief notes to remind you of what was discussed. If it is difficult for you to do this, ask if someone can take notes of the meeting for you.**

## **Preparing for a meeting**

**You may need to attend meetings at your child's school or the local authority. Meetings at school may be regular meetings, for example do discuss your child's Individual Education Plan or to hold an Annual Review, or an occasional meeting.**

- ◆ **If you are worried about the meeting, don't go alone. Choose someone supportive to take with you. Let the school know you will be bringing a friend or relative with you.**
- ◆ **Take time to prepare for the meeting in advance. Think about questions you want to ask, or points you want to raise. Make a note of these to take with you to act as a reminder.**
- ◆ **Make sure that any paperwork you need to take with you is sorted and easy to find. You may want to use a loose leaf folder.**
- ◆ **Make sure you have paper and something to write with so that you can make notes if necessary.**
- ◆ **Ask to be introduced to anyone at the meeting who you don't know.**
- ◆ **Don't be afraid to ask for any jargon or abbreviations to be explained.**
- ◆ **Try to stay calm and polite.**
- ◆ **At the end of the meeting, ask for somebody to sum up what has been agreed and what will happen next.**
- ◆ **When you get home, check and tidy up any notes you made, so that you can refer to them in the future if necessary.**

## **If things go wrong**

Even where everyone is trying to work together, there may be times when things go wrong. In these situations:

- ◆ **Try and find out the facts. Remember that children and young people may not always understand or recall situations or conversations clearly, so always make sure that you check out the facts before acting on something your child has told you. You may want to speak to the class teacher or tutor. Try and keep an open mind until you have heard all the details.**
- ◆ **Ask to meet with the school staff involved to talk through the situation and try and resolve the problem. Use the notes from the section on 'Preparing for meetings' to help you get ready for any meeting.**
- ◆ **If things can't be sorted out at a meeting, find out about the school's complaints policy. You may want to speak to one of the Parent Governors at your child's school to discuss your concerns. The school secretary will be able to tell you who this is. If your child has a statement of special educational needs, you may want to talk to the SEN governor. If this does not solve the problem, you may want to speak to local authority staff to find out if they are able to help you.**
- ◆ **The Parent Partnership Service is available to help where the problem is related to a child's special educational need or disability. Midlands SEN Mediation also offer a mediation service which can be used to resolve disagreements between parents, schools and the Local Authority. You can get more information on Midlands SEN Mediation at [www.midlandssenmediation.com](http://www.midlandssenmediation.com), or by contacting the Parent Partnership Service on 01952 457176. This number is staffed Monday—Thursday 9.30 a.m.—4.00 p.m. Answerphone facility at all other times.**

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