



...because **your** child matters

What is the Parent Partnership Service (PPS)?

The Parent Partnership Service provides an impartial advice service for parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. We work in an impartial way and provide factual, neutral information based on SEN legislation and guidance. Our aim is to help parents have the information they need to make well informed decisions about their children's education



Who are we?

Bedford Borough PPS has a full time co-ordinator, David Newbury, and a part time advisor, Ruth Kerr. We are based at Borough Hall but work at 'arms length' from the Local Authority. We also have a number of trained volunteers, known as Independent parental supporters (IPS), who can give individual help and advice to parents.

In this edition of our newsletter, we would like to focus on some of the key duties that schools have towards children with special educational needs and disabilities, including:

- The role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
- How schools should work with parents
- Achievement for all
- The Individual Education Plan (IEP)

What is the role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo)?

The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) has responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school SEN policy and co-ordination of provision for individual children.

All SENCos in mainstream schools, including Academies and Free Schools, should be qualified teachers. From September 2009, new SENCos must have undertaken accredited training leading to a national award. Ideally, the SENCo should hold a senior management position in the school and have sufficient non-teaching time to reflect the number of children with SEN in the school.

The 2008 SENCo Regulations set out the SENCo's key responsibilities as:

- identifying the pupil's SEN;
- co-ordinating the extra help for the pupil;
- monitoring the effectiveness of any extra help;
- securing relevant services where necessary;
- ensuring records of the pupil's SEN and extra help are kept;
- liaising with and informing parents regularly about their child's SEN and extra help;
- liaising with other schools when a child transfers;

- promoting the pupil's inclusion at the school;
- selecting and supervising teaching assistants who work with pupils who have SEN;
- advising teachers about differentiated teaching methods ;
- contributing to in-service training; and
- preparing and reviewing the information which governing bodies must publish on the school's SEN policy.

In addition to having a good knowledge of special educational needs, the most effective SENCOs will have expertise in four key areas of leadership and management:

- The strategic direction and development of SEN provision in the school
- The quality of teaching and learning for children with SEN
- Leading and managing staff, ensuring all staff get the advice and training they need to improve outcomes for children with SEN.
- The efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources to support provision for children with SEN and disabilities.

In this leadership role, they are able to raise the profile of inclusive practices and improve the understanding of all staff of the needs of children with SEN and disabilities.

How should schools work with parents?



“In the most successful schools the effective engagement of parents has had a profound impact on children’s progress and the confidence between the school and parent.”

Brian Lamb, Lamb Inquiry into Parental Confidence in Special Educational Needs, 2009

The SEN Code makes partnership with parents a key principle of school provision for children with special educational needs. Parents have a vital role to play in supporting their children’s education and their views and experiences should be taken into account.

SEN legislation and the Code of Practice provide parents with some important rights. These include:

- the right to be told when their child is receiving special educational help;

- the right to be involved in discussions about their child’s needs and the extra help they require, drawing on the parent’s unique knowledge about their own child
- the right to information about schools’ SEN provision;
- the right to request a statutory assessment if they are unhappy with the help provided in school.

SENCOs should be highly visible in working with parents of children with SEN, in particular, drawing up and reviewing individual education plans with parents as recommended by the SEN Code of Practice. They should also work closely with parents if a child is put forward for statutory assessment, and at the annual review for those children with statements of special educational needs. SENCOs may also take on the key worker role initiating an assessment under the Common Assessment Framework and involving other professionals and agencies where appropriate.

Achievement for All

The 'Achievement for All' initiative was developed following the Lamb inquiry into parental confidence in special education. Achievement for All is a whole-school approach to school improvement, which has had demonstrable success in improving rates of progress in English and Maths for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Carys Porter explains how Achievement For all has made a positive difference at St Joseph's Lower School in Queens Park.

"The Achievement for All programme we are implementing at St Josephs' has a particular focus on improving the attainment and wider outcomes of 18 children who are either vulnerable learners or who have English as an Additional Language and low attainment, with some identified as having special educational needs.

At St Joseph's we have implemented:

- rigorous tracking of children's progress in English and mathematics with intervention when pupils fall behind
- a termly structured conversation on educational and wider outcomes between a key mentor (a teacher that knows the pupil or family best), parents and the child; and
- a whole school approach to addressing what is getting in the way of learning, such as bullying, persistent absence, punctuality or poor social skills



Key successes:

- St Joseph's has had considerable success in accelerating the progress of both groups of pupils in the first year of the programme:
- we have seen a significant impact on pupil progress in English and mathematics for pupils in both groups;
- there have been improvements in attendance and a decrease in persistent absenteeism;
- there has been improved parental engagement in their child's learning, in attending parent consultations, structured conversations and events organised by the family support worker."

Based on this early success, the school has already made plans for extending the initiative during this next school year.

What is an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

The IEP should be discussed with you and your child and should include:

- Three or four short-term targets that match your child's needs (the targets will be set by or for your child and should be in small, specific, measurable steps)
- The ways of teaching (strategies) to be used
- The help to be put in place
- When the plan is to be reviewed (at least twice a year and usually every term)
- How the school will decide if the help has been successful.

The school should consult you as part of the process of reviewing your child's IEP. Where possible, your child should take part and be involved in setting new targets.

A review can take place at a parents' evening but the school should be willing to respond to your feelings if you ask for more time to discuss your child's plan and a more private meeting.

The review should look at:

- Progress made by your child
- Your views
- Your child's views
- The effectiveness of the IEP
- Issues affecting your child's progress
- Future action – changes to targets, strategies
- The need for further information and advice, possibly from external professionals

One parent's experience of using Parent Partnership



Ronnie and Stefan

My son Stefan has Aspergers syndrome. On transitioning to middle school, he became so overwhelmed with anxiety that he developed selective mutism and became increasingly reluctant to go to school. I was desperately worried about sending Stefan into school when he was unable to communicate even his most basic needs to anyone. I had to watch him suffer with his anxiety every day and deal with the challenging behaviour that resulted, which included outbursts of physical aggression and verbal abuse.

I had heard about the Parent Partnership Service previously and a friend suggested that I give them a call. On speaking to a member of staff, I felt for the first time

in months that someone was listening to me and wanted to help. Parent Partnership immediately contacted the departments that were involved with Stefan and I was given clear information about the status of his case within the educational system.

Over the following months, Parent Partnership advised us step by step on how to move forwards. They attended meetings with us and gradually our confidence returned as we saw that his teachers and external professionals cared about Stefan and wanted to help.

There were times when I experienced difficult days when there would be a setback of some kind, but I always knew I could pick up the phone and advice and support would be available.

We are now in a position where Stefan is receiving the correct support. A request for statutory assessment has been made by the school and we are awaiting the outcome. We have a very positive relationship with Stefan's school and we are now pulling in the same direction, communicating regularly and sharing ideas creatively about how to meet Stefan's needs.

Every day, as I see Stefan make progress and become more settled and happy, I am grateful for the Parent Partnership Service. We have come a long way and we could not have done it without them.

Reform of SEN

In recent editions of the newsletter, we have carried updates about the government's plans for reform of the SEN system. Some of the key proposals in the Children and Families Bill include: replacing statements with a single statutory assessment process and a single 'Education, Health and Care Plan' (EHCP) which can continue, if needed, up to the age of 25; giving parents more control over their child's education by offering every family with a child with an EHCP the right to a personal budget; making a wider range of short breaks available in all areas; and, ensuring greater choice for a state-funded school. The local authority will also be required to set out all of the help that a child or young person with SEN and disabilities can expect to receive in its 'Local Offer' which should be devised in consultation with parents and young people.

Local authorities will also be expected to work closely with schools, health professionals, social services and voluntary and community sector organisations to arrange sufficient provision to meet the needs of children and young people in their area.

The duties on schools will remain largely the same as now.

The next edition of the newsletter in Spring 2014 will focus on the Children and Families Bill and what these changes will mean for parents, children and young people with SEN. We will also be organising a series of information/training events about the Bill for parents – details will be made available via schools, children's centres and libraries.

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