

## **PRINCIPLE**

In everything but detail, the department's policy for parental liaison and involvement reiterates that of the school. Central to both policies is the education of young people is a collaborative enterprise involving teachers, parents and the pupils themselves. Self-evidently, parents know a great deal about their children; they have particular insights about their strengths, skills, interests, preferences, aspirations, anxieties and difficulties. Accordingly, the importance of meaningful, regular and positive communications between teachers and the parents of their pupils, can hardly be over stated - this principle forms the foundation of the Additional Needs Department's policy on liaison with parents.

N.B. The term 'parents' is employed throughout this policy to refer to parents, guardians, or others in loco parentis.

For their part in this liaison, during a normal academic year, staff in the department communicate with parents, directly or indirectly, by means of:

- the Department's own 'Handbook', which includes details of its aims and objectives, course provision, schemes of work, assessment procedures, policies, staffing, and accommodation. A handout is available to parents detailing relevant information.
- a range of 'standard' letters either:

- to parents of individual pupils, concerning, for instance, achievement and progress (IEP), attendance, punctuality, or some commendatory or disciplinary matter;

- 'personal' letters that address some matter(s) or incidents to the pupil concerned, the style and manner of which often reflect the close relationship that has developed between the teacher and the parent – this may refer to matters concerning a statement or other issues related to the Code of Practice;

- yearly formal reports that summarise pupils' achievements and progress over a specific period.

In addition, to these written communications, the department's teachers have or create opportunities to talk with parents, and to show and explain to them examples of the pupils' work and activities:

- during the schools parents evenings and open days;
- during discussions with an individual pupil's parents, initiated at the request of either the parents or the teacher;
- during certain educational visits, School exhibitions, productions or events, in which the department is significantly represented;

To help fulfil their important role in their child's education, and to be as informed as possible in any communications or discussions with teachers, parents are requested and encouraged, to the extent feasible:

- to ensure that their child has (at least) the basic equipment necessary for their work;
- to show an interest in, and to ask questions about, the work and activities in which their child is currently engaged at school and/or at home;
- periodically to look at, to ask questions about, and to comment meaningfully on, the child's folder of work;
- to ensure that the child completes any set homework;
- to make every effort to attend the parents evenings to make time to discuss their child's work and progress;
- to communicate to the Head of Department or to a particular teacher, any concerns or difficulties, interests or aspirations, that are either specific to, or that are seriously affecting their child's education.

With regard to this latter point, but also in general, in all of their communications with parents, teachers should strive to be as sensitive as possible, to the needs, apprehensions, and background circumstances of the parent(s) and the pupil. This means, among other important considerations, that in their communications with parents, teachers should:

- pay attention to the form of address, so as not to exclude or embarrass one-parent families, or children being fostered or 'in care';

- seek to employ a form and tone that is clear, straightforward, appropriately friendly, and not patronising;
- be sensitive to the known home and family circumstances of a parent and their child(ren), and should exercise caution when those circumstances are not known, e.g. the parent's first language and culture are major considerations;
- encourage apprehensive parents to visit the school and the department, and to contribute as much as possible to their child's education.

Parents are informed sufficiently in order that they can fully understand the measures the school is taking - this is particularly important during assessment and subsequent reviews. This is particularly relevant when an individual education plan (IEP) is drawn up for identified pupils and progress is reviewed regularly. Parents' and pupils' views are invited and highly valued as a contribution to the review process. Parents are always asked to give their consent to consultation with relevant health professionals and other agencies.

Parents are encouraged to discuss any problems or concerns with school - to facilitate this, the AEN Office (which is pleasantly decorated and comfortable) is available. Problems or concerns raised by parents should initially be raised with the Form Tutor or subject teacher. Most problems can be resolved in the way. But if this does not happen, parents may raise concerns with the SENCo or Headteacher. After following this line of referral parents can, if still dissatisfied, complain to the governors and later, if they are still dissatisfied, may take their complaint to the LEA.

The School's annual report contains a report of the effectiveness of provision and any amendments made or proposed over the year to the department policy. The information contained in the annual report is as follows

- Areas of strength
- Areas of development
- Targets for the next year
- Staff development
- The completion of objectives from the Department Development Plan

Parents are encouraged to offer their views on Additional Educational Needs provision at the annual meeting for parents, which is arranged by the Governing body.

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