

KEEP TALKING ...

Worried about an SEN issue – what can you do?

Information Sheet 17

If you have a son or daughter who has special educational needs (SEN) and are concerned about the steps that are being taken to support them, you may find this information sheet useful. It contains guidance on ways you can express your concerns and hopefully resolve them to everyone's satisfaction.

Have you thought about ... ?

- contacting your local parent partnership service for more information, advice and support?
- speaking to the class teacher or the ¹Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo)?
- contacting the headteacher and /or governors?
- speaking to the Local Authority (LA)?
- asking for a meeting?

Do you usually attend reviews or parent evenings? You should always discuss concerns with your child's class teacher or tutor. If you would prefer not to wait until a parents' consultation evening to do this, contact the school and ask for an appointment, explaining why you are asking for the meeting. *Please remember it may be difficult for the teacher/tutor to see you during school hours.*

What can I do to take the issue further?

If you want to take the issue further, the school's SENCo could be contacted. The SENCo has an advisory role in school and is responsible for the day to day working of the school's SEN policy. In a few schools the headteacher is also the SENCo. ²*You can ask to see a copy of the SEN policy which should explain how the school provides education for all children with SEN.*

Other people you can talk to in school about your concerns are:

- the headteacher
- the chair of the governing body
- the governor with responsibility for SEN
- the responsible person in school (This is the person who must inform all those likely to teach a child with SEN of that child's needs.

All of these people can be contacted through the school office.

1. See information sheet – 'the role of the SENCO'

2. See information sheet – 'What kind of information is available from your child's school?'

Your local parent partnership service can support you with information or by providing you with access to someone who may be able to go with you to a meeting eg an ³Independent Parental Supporter (IPS) or a representative of a voluntary organisation.

Meetings to discuss issues are often used as a way to resolve differences. These can be meetings between the people who are in disagreement (the parties to a dispute) or they might involve a third party, perhaps someone from the LEA, from a parent partnership service or from a voluntary organisation

What if my issue is with the LA?

If you have concerns about the statutory assessment process, perhaps over the ⁴content of your child's statement of SEN or a ⁵refusal to assess, you should be offered the opportunity to meet with people involved in making decisions for the LA. Your parent partnership service can give you information about this. You should also have been given the name of a contact person at the LA (Named Officer).

If you want to, you can take a friend or supporter with you to any meeting.

What is mediation?

In a few cases, mediation might be appropriate. Mediation is one of a number of different ways of resolving a disagreement and tends to be used when the people involved are finding it difficult to communicate about the issue. Mediation involves an impartial third party mediator who won't take sides.

The mediators are interested in helping people who disagree to find solutions that they can all agree to. They will help both parties to identify the issues that need to be sorted out and what can be done to resolve them. This approach can bring out helpful ideas that no-one had considered before and can lead to acceptable solutions for both parties. The process of mediation can only be started if both parties are willing to join in. It is a confidential process and either party can withdraw at any time. Taking part in mediation may not resolve all the issues but it will not affect any rights you have in law regarding the disagreement, such as your right of appeal to the ⁶SEN (and Disability) Tribunal.

How do I make a formal complaint?

Details of mediation services and arrangements in your area should be available from your child's school, the LEA, your parent partnership service and the local library. Finally, every school and LA will have a formal complaints procedure, which can be followed if you feel your concerns have not been addressed or resolved. Written information about this should be available from schools or the LA..

3. See information sheet on IPS
4. See information sheet on the contents of a statement.
5. See information sheet 'My child doesn't meet the LEA criteria'
6. See information sheet on Tribunal

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