

Working together with your child's school

This factsheet explains:

- your rights to be involved in decisions about your child's education and support
- what schools and nurseries should do to involve parents in decisions and meetings
- how to keep relationships positive and get the most from meetings
- what you can do if you are having difficulties working with your child's school or nursery.

What rights do I have to be involved in decisions?

You have a unique and expert knowledge of your child and you should be involved in decisions and discussions about their additional support.

You have the right to:

- share your views about your child's support needs
- have your views taken into account
- have a supporter or advocate present at meetings about your child's support.

The definition of a 'parent' in education law includes anyone who has parental responsibilities, guardianship or care of a child or young person. This means that if you are a kinship or foster carer, these rights apply to you too.

There are certain times when the local authority **must** seek and take account of your views and any information and advice you provide¹. These include when they are:

- assessing whether your child has additional support needs
- deciding or reviewing what additional support your child should receive
- deciding or reviewing whether your child needs a co-ordinated support plan (CSP)
- preparing a CSP for your child.

Your child's school or nursery will normally seek and take note of your views. You may never need to talk to staff from the local authority. If you do, the local authority must have a contact person that you can get advice and information from. You can find out from our website: www.enquire.org.uk/local-authorities who the contact person is in your area.

How will my child's school or nursery involve me?

Guidance on the law on additional support for learning² explains how local authorities, schools and nurseries should work with parents. It encourages good relationships and partnership working and sets out some guidelines for communicating with parents of pupils with additional support needs.

These include:

- producing clear and accessible information
- developing good working relationships with parents
- holding meetings that work well
- making joint decisions about what to do
- taking responsibility for agreed actions.

You should expect the people who work with your child to:

- value and take into account your knowledge of your child
- recognise you as a vital partner in your child's learning
- make sure you understand how things work and what your rights are
- give you the information you need so that you can participate fully
- seek constructive ways of overcoming differences of opinion
- cater for any support needs you have, for example if you need an interpreter or information in a particular format.

¹Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended

²Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice (2017)

How can I work positively with my child's school or nursery?

Having a good relationship with your child's school or nursery can help with getting your child the support they need. Being able to have open, honest and positive conversations can help to identify and address issues early and avoid disagreements starting.

Creating positive conversations involves two-way sharing of information. As a parent you have a lot to offer. You know your child best and can help everyone understand your child better. School or nursery staff can share how your child gets on during the day and use their professional knowledge to keep you updated and give advice on their learning progress.

The following steps can help build and maintain positive relationships:

- prepare what you want to say in advance if there are issues you want to raise
- arrange a time to talk with the teacher or other staff member
- explain what you want to talk about so that they can prepare for the conversation
- try to stay calm and focus on what is most important for your child
- listen to other people's perspectives and be open to suggestions
- where possible, have solutions in mind and offer them for discussion
- make it clear that you want to work together to solve any problems that arise.

If talking to people at the school or nursery feels difficult, you could try putting your thoughts in writing before you meet them. This can help give you time to gather your thoughts and clearly set out the things you would like to say.

Meetings

Attending meetings about your child's education and support can be a positive experience and a good opportunity to hear about the progress your child is making.

However, sometimes meetings can be difficult, especially if you need to talk about things you are feeling worried or unhappy about. Remember that you have the right to be involved in decisions and to have your views heard and that you can take someone along with you to support you if you would find this helpful.

Depending on where you live and your child's needs, there might be different names for the different types of meetings you may attend. Meetings will often just be between you and the school or nursery staff that are most involved in your child's education.

If your child gets help from professionals outside school or nursery, such as from health services or social work, you might also have joint meetings with everyone together. These can be called things like 'team around the child (TAC)' meetings or 'multi-agency' meetings.

What should I expect from meetings?

There are a number of things that the people who work with your child can do to help you to participate in a meaningful way.

The people running the meeting should ask you what times will suit you best and take account of other family responsibilities or work commitments you may have.

The person organising the meeting should tell you what is going to be discussed. They should ask you what you would like to raise at the meeting. They should tell you in advance who will be at the meeting. If there is anyone you have not met before attending, you should be told what their role is.

There should be plenty of time at the meeting for you to express your views and decisions should be made when you are present where possible.

You should receive notes or minutes of the meeting at the same time as everyone else that was at the meeting. These should include any points you raised and any decisions made at the meeting. If the meeting is about planning your child's support, you should receive an updated copy of the plan.

How can I get the most from meetings?

There are lots of things you can do before and during meetings to help you feel prepared and confident. Here are some tips that parents have given us about attending meetings:

- remember that you are the expert on your child
- write down some notes about what you want to say to take in with you
- accept that it is OK to show your emotions
- if your child is not going to attend the meeting, ask them what they would like to say to the people at the meeting

- take your time to express your views
- ask if you could speak first at the meeting to make sure you get the opportunity to have your say
- try to start with something positive — for example, ‘thank you for arranging this meeting’
- if there are specific things you want to talk about, contact the person organising the meeting in advance to let them know
- if an important member of staff cannot attend, ask if they can put something in writing that can be shared at or before the meeting
- be open to suggestions and willing to negotiate
- take a photo of your child with you
- if you are not clear on what someone has said, say in your own words what you have understood, and check this with the other people at the meeting
- ask for a written record of the meeting’s main points or actions
- bring along a supporter or advocate.

Bringing someone to meetings to support you

You have the right to take a supporter or advocate along to meetings about your child’s additional support.

A supporter can be a family member, friend, partner, or anyone else who you would like to support you. It can also be someone from a voluntary service. Or it could be another professional supporting your family, if supporting you would not conflict with any of their professional duties.

A supporter can attend meetings with you, take notes, and give you moral support and advice.

An advocate can be someone from an advocacy organisation or anyone else that you would like to speak on your behalf. An advocate can wholly or partly communicate on your behalf, both in meetings and in other ways. They can also help you write letters or complete forms.

We can provide contact details of local support or advocacy organisations. You can contact the helpline on **0345 123 2303** or email us at **info@enquire.org.uk**

What can I do if I feel the school or nursery are not listening to me?

If you do not feel that the school or nursery is involving you in decisions or listening to your views, or if you disagree with something they have said or done, it is important to raise your concerns early to try and stop the problem getting bigger. You could ask for a meeting to discuss your concerns or try writing to school or nursery to explain.

If the problem continues, the next step would be to speak or write to more senior staff at the school or nursery. If you have discussed your concerns with the head or deputy head teacher and are still worried or unhappy, you can speak to the person responsible for additional support for learning at the local authority. You can find out who this is from our website: www.enquire.org.uk/local-authorities

Find out more in our factsheet on [Avoiding and solving problems](#).

What if people do not do what they said they would do?

If you feel that the school, nursery, or local authority agreed to do something but it does not happen, you can write to the person who agreed to the action. You can point out what was agreed and when (for example in a planning meeting on a particular date) and ask when they will do what they agreed to.

When putting your concerns in writing:

- always date a letter (if you are emailing, your email will have a date on it)
- start with a positive statement if possible
- keep your email or letter brief and to the point
- ask for a reply by a certain date
- keep a copy of all correspondence.

If you find it difficult to write letters or emails, ask for help from a friend, supporter or advocate (see '**Bringing someone to meetings to support you**').

If the person you write to still does not take the agreed action, or does not respond, you can write to their manager. Find out more in our factsheet on [Avoiding and solving problems](#).



How Enquire can help

Enquire can help you understand your child's rights to additional support for learning and how to work in partnership with their school or nursery to make sure your child gets the support they need.

Enquire can:

- explain your child's rights to additional support for learning
- listen to any questions and concerns
- advise you on the way forward
- help you find local education and support services.

You can contact our helpline on **0345 123 2303** or info@enquire.org.uk
Access to interpreters is available.

You can also find lots more information about additional support for learning, including our full range of publications, at www.enquire.org.uk

The information on our website is available in over 100 languages and with a range of accessibility tools, such as text-to-speech.

Reach is our website for children and young people. Reach helps pupils to understand their rights to feel supported, included, listened to and involved in decisions at school: www.reach.scot

Enquire is also a partner in the My Rights, My Say service. My Rights, My Say supports children aged 12-15 with additional support needs to exercise their rights to be involved in decisions about their support in school:
www.myrightsmysay.scot

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