

Towards 2014 – Preparing for Change

Guidance Sheet 6 (July 2014)

Parents and Professionals Working in Partnership

The Issue:

The Lamb Inquiry Final Report (2009)

'We met with some of the happiest parents in the country and some of the angriest. Many had children who are well-supported and making good progress.

But we also met parents for whom the education system represents a battle to get the needs of their children identified and for these to be met. The crucial issue is that both experiences happen within the same system.'

Parents say their confidence in the SEN system is promoted by successful communication and accurate, clear information.

Parents say their confidence in the SEN system is undermined by poor communication and lack of accurate information

The (0-25) SEN Code of Practice (July 2014) says:

6.20 Parents know their children best and it is important that all professionals listen and understand when parents express concerns about their child's development.

6.45 Schools should take seriously any concerns raised by a parent.

6.43 Where it is decided that a pupil does have SEN, the decision should be recorded in the school records and the pupil's parents **must** be formally informed that special educational provision is being made.

6.65 Where a pupil is receiving SEN support.... schools should meet parents at least three times each year.

6.67 These discussions should be led by a teacher with good knowledge and understanding of the pupil who is aware of their needs and attainment. This will usually be the class teacher or form tutor, supported by the SENCO.

Guidance:

The SEN Code of Practice commends the approach taken by Achievement for All, which demonstrates that when a whole school approach to supporting pupils with SEN is taken, along with effective engagement with parents, there can be a clear impact on attainment. This approach includes the use of the Structured Conversation, the aim of which is to have a listening conversation, which draws on parents' knowledge and aspirations for their child.

A structured conversation aims to:

- explore, understand and clarify issues
- help identify priorities and desired outcomes
- agree next steps and actions

Meetings are expected to take place termly, be aligned with the normal cycle of discussions with parents of all pupils and will be longer than most parent teacher meetings.

This approach demonstrates very good practice to which schools should aspire. There are big implications for time and schools should consider carefully which pupils will be identified with SEN under the new Code of Practice. The other major implication is for staff training, to improve their knowledge of the main barriers to learning and strategies to overcome them, as well as their skills in leading effective meetings with parents.