



School meetings

As a parent or carer of a child with special educational needs and/or a disability, you will be invited to attend meetings about your child in school. There may also be times when you want to request a meeting to discuss your child. It is important that the school/setting has regard to your views, wishes and feelings, and those of your child, and that you and your child participate as fully as possible in decisions.

Parents and carers often say that it can be quite intimidating meeting with school and other services; knowing what to say and what to expect from the meeting. So, below are some ideas on who to meet with, how to request and help to prepare for meetings in order to get the best out of them for you and your child.

Please note: The terms in this document refer to the UK education system, but the basic principles will be the same for anywhere in the world.....

Who shall I arrange to meet with?

You should ask to meet with your child's class teacher or subject teacher and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO).

If you do not know who the SENCO is, call the school to ask for their name and find out when is the best time to talk to them. Sometimes, it may be beneficial to also meet with your child's Head of Year or Head of House (especially in secondary school). In colleges and early years settings, there will be someone who has a similar role to the SENCo.

If there are particular people from outside school who you feel should be there, ask for them to be invited for example: Educational Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist etc.

Requesting a meeting

You can request a meeting by telephone/email or in person to arrange a convenient time and date. You can also request a meeting in writing. Remember to include the person(s) you would like to meet with, the purpose of the meeting, along with times and dates that are convenient for you to meet and your contact number.

If you need help because of your own additional needs, please remember to tell the people holding the meeting to make sure they can meet your needs. If English is not your first language or if you find it difficult, you can ask for an interpreter. This may take some time to arrange so remember to ask for this well ahead of the meeting.

Taking people with you

You may want to take your partner, a friend or someone else with you to the meeting for support. The person with you may be able to take notes of what was discussed and by whom. This can be really useful as it can be hard to remember everything that was discussed after the meeting. If you are taking someone with you, remember to let the school know beforehand.

Preparing for the meeting

ALWAYS plan what you are going to say. Be clear about what you are going to ask and what you want to discuss.

You should ideally:

- Make a note of your concerns
- Make a list of the questions you would like to ask:
 - Is my child making progress?
 - What help does my child receive in school?
 - Does school share my concerns?
 - How can I support my child at home?
- Think about what you would like to achieve from the meeting
- List the things that you want to happen in order of importance
- Be realistic about what you are asking for
- Ask your child their views before the meeting (if they are able), for example:
 - Do they have any worries?
 - What do they find difficult?
 - Or decide if you would like your child present for the meeting
- Keep all important information about your child together, including school reports, medical information, copies of letters from the school or reports from other professionals
- Also keep copies of all letters that you send

The meeting itself

It is important to keep meetings and to be on time. If for any reason you cannot attend, ensure you let the school know with as much notice as possible.

If no introductions are made, ask who each person is and what their role is.

If you do not understand any of the terms used - ALWAYS ask for an explanation.

If a report, or any paperwork, about your child is brought to the meeting ask for time to read it. (Ideally any paperwork should be sent to the relevant people prior to the meeting.)

If you disagree with the things being said about your child do not hesitate to give your opinion. You know your child best. But always remain composed and polite.

Try to make your point in a calm and polite way. If you are able to do this people may be more willing to listen and co-operate with you. If things become too difficult for you, ask to take a break.

Be realistic about what you can ask for and be prepared to be flexible and talk about different options and alternatives. Often, reasonable compromises are the best possible outcome.

Make sure you have discussed everything you want to discuss BEFORE the meeting ends. If the meeting has to come to an end and you have outstanding issues, ask for another date.

At the end of the meeting either you or your supporter should ask for any actions to be confirmed – preferably followed up in writing. Think about what will happen next, who is doing what, how will this be reviewed and when there will be a further meeting.

If notes are being taken during the meeting, ensure a copy of these will be sent to you.

It may be helpful to agree a follow up meeting to review progress and next steps.

After the meeting

Make a note of the date of any review meeting.

If you had support you may wish to discuss how you felt the meeting went.

Are there any actions you need to follow up?

Talk to your child (when applicable), especially if they attended the meeting – how did they feel?

Tell your child what has been agreed so that he or she feels reassured about support.