WORKING WITH PARENTS

Guidance for Schools
INTRODUCTION

Rationale and Aims of Guidance

Adults involved in the education of children and young people inevitably communicate with parents/carers for a wide range of reasons. Some of this communication will be routine and/or planned and some will be unplanned.

Evidence suggests that the way in which communication is planned and managed can have a significant impact on how what is said or written is interpreted by parents. This, in turn, will impact on the way in which they feel able to support schools in the education and social inclusion of their children.

This guidance framework has been produced to complement and enhance the existing policies and practice in schools, rather than in an attempt to replace effective systems for communication. Its development has been prompted in recognition of the fact that there has been an increase in recent years, alongside changes in legislation and provision, in the numbers of parents raising concerns and complaints in relation to their children’s education. A study carried out in the Local Authority has highlighted that the likelihood of such a course of action is linked to issues related to communication; with consistency being a key factor in promoting and sustaining positive working relationships.

This guidance framework has been produced by a working group of professionals from schools and support agencies from within Buckinghamshire, in consultation with a range of stakeholders, with the aim of promoting positive communication and outcomes.

Working with Parents Working Group
Core Group:
Laura Warren, Educational Psychologist (Chair)
Mark Smith, Assistant Education Officer
Penny Chadwick, Parent Partnership Officer
Mary Taylor, Team Coordinator Cognition & Learning.

Headteacher Representation:
Pauline Dichler (Stony Dean School)
Paul Marchant (Waterside Combined School)
Irene Perrin (Chesham Park Community College)
James Astbury (Butler’s Court School).
## Contents

**Section A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXAMPLE POLICY</td>
<td>1 – 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRACTICE GUIDELINES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with parents</td>
<td>5 – 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing for meetings – Checklist</td>
<td>9 – 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing meetings</td>
<td>12 – 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing up meeting minutes</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-meeting action record (example)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing difficulties</td>
<td>16 – 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Section B – Photocopiable Resources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form to record communication with parents</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting preparation checklist</td>
<td>21 – 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form to send to parents in preparation for meeting</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter to professional in preparation for meeting</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines to accompany request for written report</td>
<td>26 – 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter to professional sending report/s</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter to parent/carer sending professional report</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting record pro-forma</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter accompanying minutes of meeting</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-meeting action record</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaint form</td>
<td>33 - 34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section A
EXAMPLE POLICY
HOME/SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP POLICY

Promoting Partnership

The Every Child Matters Agenda highlights the importance of partnership working to maximise each child’s learning, development and well-being.

To help achieve this, at ______ School we have systems in place that support all adult members of the school community, including teachers, support staff and parents/carers in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. This includes agreed ways for recording, communicating and monitoring progress and any issues or concerns about individual children.

Sharing Information about Pupils’ Progress

During the course of the academic year, teachers communicate with parents/carers each term about their child’s academic progress, either in face-to-face meetings, or by way of written reports.

When a pupil has special educational needs (SEN), additional meetings will be held to review his or her individual education plan (IEP) (SEN Code of Practice, section 6:61).

Addressing Individual Pupil Concerns

From time to time, issues arise either at school, or at home, that may require additional discussion and, possibly, action to be taken.

In order to achieve the most positive outcomes for our pupils, we are committed to raising concerns early and adopting a positive approach to addressing issues and concerns. In particular, we recognise the benefits of cooperation and mutual support in partnership working.

Raising and Addressing Concerns

In cases where a teacher has a particular concern or question about a child’s progress or well-being, the parent/carer will be contacted, either by phone, or by sending a note home. (Parents/carers are asked to indicate their preference by completing the accompanying acknowledgement slip.)

In cases where a parent/carer has a concern about their child, we would request that you telephone the school to arrange an informal meeting with the class teacher. If the teacher is unable to take your call, he or she will contact you within 3 working days to arrange a mutually convenient date and time to meet. Parents/carers are always welcome to invite an additional adult to meetings.
If, at the meeting, it is decided to hold a subsequent planning or review meeting, or in the case of ongoing concerns, additional meetings will take place within 6 weeks.

Once a meeting date has been set, we would ask that parents/carers make every effort to attend and inform the school of the need to rearrange the meeting at the earliest opportunity. This is particularly important when professionals from outside of the school have been invited to attend.

**Record Keeping**

Keeping written records of telephone discussions and meetings is important in helping to ensure that action plans are successfully managed, particularly when several adults are working together to support a child.

There will be situations where it is useful and practical to produce and distribute a written record of a discussion at the time it takes place. However, in cases where the record is completed after a meeting, a copy will be sent home within 3 working days. (The optional reply slip at the bottom of the record can be used to notify the school if something recorded needs amending, or clarifying.) If the slip is not returned to school within 14 days, this will be taken to indicate that the record is accurate and complete.

**Code of Conduct**

At ___ School we value the contribution made to our community by all our members, regardless of age or position and recognise the importance of promoting each individual’s well-being.

This means that we take positive action to ensure that our teaching and support staff, as well as our pupils, are treated in a way that enables them to perform their duties to the best of their ability.

All members of the school’s community, as well as visitors, are expected to be polite and courteous in their communication, and to show respect for each other. Any behaviour that undermines this, including swearing, shouting, confrontation, intimidation, threats, personal insults, spreading rumours and breaches of confidence will be followed-up using the guidance contained in the school’s complaints policy.

We would respectfully draw attention to the fact that ongoing, or repeated incidents of behaviour that have the potential to affect the well-being of one or more individuals will lead to action that may ultimately result in a ban from the school site.
Acknowledgement Slip

I acknowledge that I have read the Home/School Partnership Policy.

I would prefer to be contacted by phone / in writing if the school has concerns about my child. Please delete as appropriate.

Reply Slip

I am unclear about what has been written on the attached meeting record and would ask that you contact me to discuss this.
PRACTICE GUIDELINES
Communication with Parents

Adults involved in the education of children and young people inevitably communicate with parents/carers for a wide range of reasons. Some of this communication will be routine and/or planned and some will unplanned.

Evidence suggests that the way in which communication is planned and managed can have a significant impact on how what is said or written is interpreted by parents. This, in turn, will impact on the way in which they feel able to support schools in the education and social inclusion of their children.

General Principles

• Use school policy as a guide, to ensure consistency.

• Monitor style and phrasing of communication e.g. differentiate between fact and opinion and present information neutrally.

• Notice, acknowledge and respond (in line with school policy and training guidelines) to feelings, beliefs and behaviours that are interfering with effective communication and, therefore, creating barriers to working within agreed professional frameworks.

• Seek supervision and support from colleagues in new or difficult situations.

Informal Communication

Informal communication refers to that which occurs between a practitioner and a parent/carer in response to an email, telephone call, note in the school diary, or through an unplanned face-to-face discussion with a parent or carer.

It is always helpful to be clear about the reason for the communication, particularly when there has been recent communication that appeared to be focused around the same, or a similar issue. If the reason for the communication is unclear, seek clarification from the parent or carer as to their exact concern or question.

It is important to ensure that all communication is appropriately recorded, e.g. in terms of what was discussed and the actions that were agreed. Using a school-wide communication record can help ensure consistency. This should be completed on the day of the communication (see Record of Communication pro-forma). In addition, it is advisable to consider where the communication records are stored and if, when and how they are shared with parents.
Formal Communication

a) In writing

In some instances, regardless of whether and in what form a parent has initiated communication with a member of staff, it will be more appropriate to respond by letter.

While occasionally some parents will have particularly views or reactions to receiving a formal letter, its impact can be limited when:

• parents’ and/or school’s concerns, issues or questions are clearly stated;
• the action/s to be taken by whom and when is outlined;
• the process for feedback and review is detailed;
• where appropriate, choices are offered (e.g. dates/times for meetings) within policy guidelines;
• parents are invited to ask additional questions, highlight additional concerns, or to seek additional clarification of issues already raised.

b) Face-to-face meetings

Some parents and indeed some professionals find meetings difficult. They can, for a range of reasons, generate strong emotions in people which serve as barriers to clear thinking, effective communication and partnership working.

The person chairing a meeting has a key role to play in ensuring that everyone attending has their needs and perspectives acknowledged and met, as far as is possible. To achieve this, meetings need to be carefully planned (see Preparing for Meetings Checklist) and managed (see Guidelines for Managing Meetings), in addition to which there need to be systems in place to ensure that the meeting is appropriately minuted (see Guidelines for Drawing up Minutes) and that the action plan is carried out as agreed (see Post-meeting Action pro-forma).

Some parents need particular support and encouragement to attend meetings. In some cases, parents find it too difficult either to attend meetings, or to speak within a formal group setting.

In cases where such difficulties might be anticipated, e.g. where the parent has not attended previous meetings, it is helpful to make alternative, modified arrangements that will enable parents, or carers to make a positive contribution to their child’s education. Practical adaptations can be made, such as inviting the parent to provide a written, or taped submission for scribing, for inclusion in the meeting. Similarly, arrangements could be made
for a one-to-one meeting, where the most appropriate member of staff could talk through the minutes of a meeting.

**Post-Communication Actions**

Actions agreed should be implemented within the agreed timeframe. Nominated staff should have responsibility for following through on particular aspects of the action plan *(See Post-meeting Action Record pro-forma).*
PREPARING FOR MEETINGS
Checklist

The following steps, taken to prepare for a meeting, can help to ensure that it runs smoothly and achieves its aims.

The *p* symbol in the 'Action Taken' column indicates that a pro-forma letter or form is contained in the guidelines pack.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things to Consider</th>
<th>Action Taken (Tick &amp; Date)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHEN PLANNING A MEETING</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Aim/s of meeting? – e.g. questions to answer, issues/concerns to address, disagreements to resolve.</td>
<td>• Agenda devised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who should attend? Consider the contribution and requirements of those suggested to attend the planned meeting e.g. providing advice, information or support. What will happen if a key person sends apologies, or has to cancel?</td>
<td>• Attendance list decided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support professionals e.g. interpreters contacted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When will the meeting be held? – e.g. to enable the key people attend, to enable the relevant information/reports to be produced and distributed.</td>
<td>• Date and time of meeting identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where will the meeting be held? Consider size, location and layout. Does it comply with health and safety guidelines? Are confidentiality and comfort assured?</td>
<td>• Appropriate venue identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How long will be needed for the meeting, in view of the number and complexity of the issues, length of agenda and number of people attending? If unsure, allow more time, as it is always better to finish a meeting early, than have to cut it short.</td>
<td>• Meeting room secured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What information needs to be gathered (other than in report form) and from whom? – e.g. about a particular incident, data on child’s</td>
<td>• Relevant information requested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relevant information received.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Progress or Attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What information needs to be distributed, and to whom, ahead of the meeting? Who will coordinate and monitor this?</td>
<td>Letter sent to all on attendance list inviting them to meeting (list names)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are written reports from professionals needed?</td>
<td>Letter/s requesting reports are sent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have reports been received?</td>
<td>Report/s received on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(If not, how is this followed up, e.g. phone call to chase; meeting postponed)</td>
<td>Non-receipt of report/s followed up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do reports contain personal or biased views, or technical jargon?</td>
<td>Report/s may be inappropriate/need action before distribution – discuss with line manager.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are they received in time to be posted out? If not, what action should be taken?</td>
<td>Report/s late, so give out at meeting + allow extra time to read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Key report/s not available, so meeting postponed and attendees notified by most efficient and reliable means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have reports been distributed?</td>
<td>Reports sent with accompanying letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the meeting likely to need a dedicated minute-taker?</td>
<td>Person identified to take minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has someone been identified to take minutes?</td>
<td>Person is available and has agreed to take minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the minute-taker seen the guidelines for taking minutes?</td>
<td>Minute-taker has seen guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the minute-taker familiar with the agenda?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Might there be one or more professional who needs particular training, support or management during the meeting?</td>
<td>Identify and provide the necessary training, management and or/support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## ON THE DAY OF THE MEETING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is meeting room set up?</td>
<td>Sufficient seating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptable temperature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action taken to prevent interruptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting arranged to facilitate positive communication e.g. professionals not all seated facing parent/s + chairs are the same height.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would it be helpful to type up and distribute the agenda?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have any questions/concerns raised in advance by attendees been included in the agenda?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have any late reports/documents to share been photocopied?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the meeting likely to be highly charged or very contentious?</td>
<td>Ensure familiarity with meeting ‘Code of Conduct’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## FOLLOWING THE MEETING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have the minutes been typed up and distributed?</td>
<td>Minutes distributed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the points agreed in the meeting been actioned?</td>
<td>Post-meeting Action Record completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have non-attenders who haven’t given apologies been contacted?</td>
<td>Contact made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a note been made of any non-attenders with reasons. Does this information need to be taken into account when planning future meetings/making appointments?</td>
<td>Note added to school records.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MANAGING MEETINGS

Effective outcomes from meetings can be achieved by adhering to some basic good practice.

At the Beginning of the Meeting

Welcome everyone and state reason for meeting.

Chair introduces him or herself and minute-taker.

Apologies received.

Chair requests everyone to introduce themselves along with their title.

Run through agenda of meeting and check whether there are any additional points to be added.

Agree a time frame - everyone is then clear as to the time they have to get their points across.

If the meeting is likely to be highly charged or very contentious, give advice on ‘Code of Conduct’ for all to adhere to:

- Everyone should be courteous to each other;
- Everyone should be allowed to have their say in an uninterrupted way.

Should this not be the case, the appropriate action should be taken in accordance with the school’s policy, e.g. the person behaving discourteously will be given the opportunity to take time out to calm down.

If reports/documents are to be discussed, check that everyone has had sight of them. If not, allow time for them to be read during the meeting. Check if attendees are happy for the extra time to be added to the meeting. If this is not possible, give information and reassurance about how this additional task will be time-managed.

During the Meeting

Allow everyone to have a say and look out for signs of frustration on the part of those who might feel uncomfortable in such settings, or those who might become distressed/angry when discussing particular issues. If someone is finding the meeting difficult, use strategies to support the individual/s and the meeting, e.g. by acknowledging this, pacing the meeting and emphasising points of agreement.

School staff should be responsible for monitoring and managing their own feelings and behaviour (including non-verbal) during meetings. Training,
support and supervision should be offered ahead of and/after meetings to contribute to staff CPD and well-being.

Manage the time effectively. Try to be aware of where you are in terms of time and the issues that remain.

Summarise the key points as you move through the agenda, to assist the meeting and the minute-taker.

Ask for clarification about any point that is unclear.

Where significant disagreements persist, confirm these will be minuted and correctly attributed.

**Concluding the Meeting**

Check that everyone has had a chance to say what he or she wishes.

Clarify the actions that have come out of the meeting: who will be undertaking the actions and the timeframes involved.

Confirm that the minutes will be sent out in draft by (date) and that should there be no objections within (x days) they will be accepted as a final record.

Should there be a follow-up meeting, agree a date and time.

Thank everyone for attending.
GUIDELINES FOR DRAWING UP MINUTES OF MEETINGS

Minutes should be a succinct, factual record of a meeting. They should include issues that are disputed or points of disagreement, and clearly set out the agreed actions.

They should be sent out within the agreed time in draft form, with a covering letter inviting attendees to identify inaccuracies or omissions within a stated time limit (see Covering Letter pro-forma).

Include the following (see Minutes template):

Date and time of meeting;

Those present and titles;

Apologies received;

Record accurately and succinctly the main points of the meeting (as agreed at the time) and attribute them appropriately;

Record all actions agreed, person responsible for following up and time frame involved;

Record date, time and venue of any further meetings.

Remember to:

Avoid jargon;

Use a clear font and space out appropriately;

Make arrangements for people with limited English language or literacy skills to access the minutes.
Post-Meeting Action Record

As the minutes of meetings usually get filed, it can be helpful to create a separate form to facilitate the implementation of the action plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Child:</th>
<th>Date of Meeting:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What</strong></td>
<td><strong>Who</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request assessment by specialist teacher, cognition and learning team, as priority</td>
<td>SENCo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe child in 4 lessons</td>
<td>LSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate suggestion of bullying</td>
<td>Class teacher (in accordance with school policy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSP to be distributed</td>
<td>Headteacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collate information in child’s file, e.g. behaviour cards, attainment data, test data, feedback from PRU teacher</td>
<td>SENCo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor need to request EP involvement</td>
<td>SENCo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide date of review meeting</td>
<td>SENCo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Managing Difficulties

With the support of the relevant policies and procedures, educational personnel are able to establish and maintain positive working partnerships with the significant majority of parents and carers.

However, despite the best efforts of individuals and/or teams of people to be supportive, positive, clear and consistent in their communication, some individuals will still find this difficult.

Why do they occur?

We all have a set of beliefs and expectations about people, including ourselves, which influence how we interpret and respond to others’ behaviour. The ability to do this accurately tends to be reduced under conditions that are stressful, i.e. that trigger anxiety.

In the context of situations perceived as stressful, most people’s prior experience in the context of one, or more, significant relationships (e.g. of being understood and supported) enables them to take account of others’ needs, and, thus, manage their emotions and behave in a way that effectively gains and maintains the support of others.

However, in some cases, people’s experiences make them particularly dependent on others, under conditions that create anxiety, to help them regulate their emotions, although the way in which they do so can be inappropriate; creating stress and anxiety in those being asked to provide support. The range of unhelpful behaviours can include an unusual demand for contact (either phone, written, or face-to-face) emotional outbursts, inflexible thinking and behaviour, non-cooperation and making complaints against one, or more individuals, or agencies.

How is it helpful to respond?

As professionals, it can be helpful to recognise the possible signs of difficulty, as this can enable action to be taken to avoid an escalation of the issues to the point that a formal complaint is made.

Firstly, it is important to recognise that this type of behaviour, which could lead to an informal complaint being made, is rarely, initially, intended as a criticism towards a particular individual. However, it is important to recognise that the initial way in which a situation is managed creates expectations, which, if altered at a later date, can create additional difficulties, that can be even more problematic to manage. Take the following example:

A parent whose child was being bullied by a group of classmates reports it to the school. An investigation is undertaken, during which time the parent drops in to see the teacher after school each day, to check all is okay. Following the investigation, the situation is reported to be resolved. However, the parent continues to drop in to see the teacher several times a week. These frequent,
unplanned meetings take up a great deal of the teacher's time. After several weeks, she suggests to the parent that as things have settled down, the pattern of communication can revert to normal. The parent finds this difficult to accept, and so asks for a home-school communication book to be introduced. The teacher, anxious not to upset the parent, agrees, suggesting that entries will only be made if there is something pertinent to highlight. The parent makes the first entry, asking how her son has been at the end of the first week. The teacher, feeling obligated to reply to a direct question, enters a written response. Over the next several months, the entries become more frequent (almost daily), longer and more demanding (e.g. asking for specific information and action on the part of the teacher). The effects on the teacher are notable and include feeling stressed and taking time off work. Eventually, the head teacher finds out what is happening and intervenes to curtail the arrangement. The parent becomes very emotional during a meeting that she insisted was convened, during which she accuses the school of neglecting to take her son’s bullying seriously. She leaves the meeting, threatening to make a complaint about the child’s teacher and about the school, to the governing body.

The parent’s pattern of behaviour suggests that she might have had her own personal needs, unrelated to her child’s, that the contact with the school was meeting.

As professionals working with, and supporting parents and carers, having an awareness of the likelihood of this will help to ensure that relationships are managed effectively and that difficulties are approached in a way that recognises and supports individuals, e.g. with appreciating the needs of others and in seeking appropriate support. At the same time, it will enable the school to prioritise the needs of the children affected, as well as support the relevant professionals.

While all situations are unique to some extent, taking the following steps is advisable as a matter of course:

Seek advice if a request/plan is made to alter the pattern of communication;

Be clear with parents and carers about the aims and duration of any alterations to routine communication (use the Record of Communication with Parents). Take account of the parent’s feelings (e.g. helplessness or emotional insecurity) competing needs and concerns. Consider where else they could access support;

Avoid responding in the moment to emotional parental displays. Draw on the school’s Home/School Partnership policy to help manage difficult interactions;

Be familiar with the laws and policies (e.g. in relation to meeting children’s needs and health and safety) that govern educational decision-making and how these guide professional decision-making and behaviour (e.g. identifying and reporting concerns and boundaries in relation to roles and responsibilities);
Don’t try to avoid speaking to, or meeting with, a parent or carer who is being difficult, without first seeking advice, as this is likely to create additional demands for communication, or perceived cause for complaint;

Ensure that the systems in place in school enable parents to receive consistent messages and/or information. Keep and make effective use of written records, following the guidelines outlined in this folder;

Seek access to supervision and support to minimise and relieve stress created by working with parents who are being challenging.

N.B. It is important to clarify that for pupils who have communication difficulties, regular home/school contact through the use of a home/school book can be a valuable means of sharing information. However, this will usually be introduced as part of a school’s policy to support children with special educational needs.

**Dealing with Complaints**

In the event of a parent or carer making a complaint, make a detailed, factual record *(see Complaint Record)*.

Check whether any actions that were agreed have been carried out.

Clarify whether this is part of what the parent perceives is an ongoing problem, or whether it is a new problem, taking account of the fact that very occasionally parents will make a complaint as a way of gaining, or maintaining attention/support. If the parent indicates that the complaint is related to an ongoing issue, pinpoint which aspect is creating the cause for complaint. Check this against the records. If it appears from the records that the issue about which the complaint has been made has been addressed, communicate this clearly to the parent.

Ask the parent what action he, or she, would find helpful, e.g. an apology, or reassurance that the situation causing concern will be handled differently in the future (refer to School’s Complaints Procedure for more detailed guidance). If a meeting is agreed, make use of the meeting guidance contained in the booklet, e.g. by agreeing clear aims ahead of time.

Be mindful of the fact that, on rare occasions, schools will encounter parents whose desire for ‘justice’ transcends the usual limitations of what is generally acceptable as practicable, in order to show that others are wrong; in extreme cases creating trouble or harassing people, or organizations, to do so. The reasons for individuals choosing to engage in such behaviour are complex. If a school has reason to believe that a parent is unreasonably aggressive or demanding, or if he or she is making reference to the law in any way, the matter should be referred to the head teacher for advice.
Section B
Record of Communication with Parent

Date: ………………..  Time: …………………  Duration: ……………………..

Discussion between: ………………………………………………………………………

Discussion initiated by: ………………………………………..

Purpose of discussion: ………………………………………

Telephone/Face-to-face

Main Points Discussed:

•

•

•

Agreed Actions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By whom?</th>
<th>When and how review and/or feedback?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| •       |                                      |
| •       |                                      |
| •       |                                      |

Record completed by: ……………………………  Date completed: …………………

Copy of record to: parents; school file  Date sent to parents: ………..

OPTIONAL PARENT REPLY SLIP

(If a change or addition to the record is being requested)

I would like to request a change to this record as follows:

________________________________________________________________________

I understand that you will follow this up and contact me within 3 working days.
The *p* symbol in the 'Action Taken' column indicates that a pro-forma letter or form is contained in the guidelines pack.

## PREPARING FOR MEETINGS
### Checklist (to complete)

The *p* symbol in the 'Action Taken' column indicates that a pro-forma letter or form is contained in the guidelines pack.

### Things to Consider | Action Taken (Tick & Date)
--- | ---
### WHEN PLANNING A MEETING
- **Aim/s of meeting?**
  - Agenda devised
- **Who should attend?**
  - Attendance list decided
  - Support professionals e.g. interpreters contacted
  - Reports from professionals requested *
- **When will the meeting be held?**
  - Date and time of meeting identified
- **Where will the meeting be held?**
  - Appropriate venue identified
- **How long will be needed for the meeting in view of the number and complexity of the issues, length of agenda and number of people attending?**
  - Meeting room secured
- **What information needs to be gathered (other than in report form) and from whom?**
  - Relevant information requested
  - Relevant information received
- **What information needs to be distributed and to whom, ahead of the meeting? Who will coordinate and monitor this?**
  - Letter sent to all on attendance list inviting them to meeting (list names) *
- **Are written reports from professionals needed?**
  - Letter/s requesting reports are sent *
- **Have reports been received?**
  - Report/s received on time
- **Do reports contain personal or biased views, or technical jargon?**
  - Non-receipt of report/s followed up
  - Report/s may be inappropriate/need action before distribution – discuss with line manager
• Are they received in time to be posted out? If not, what action should be taken?
  • Report/s late, so give out at meeting and allow extra time to read
  • Key report/s not available, so meeting postponed and attendees notified by most efficient and reliable means

• Have reports been distributed?
  • Reports sent with accompanying letter *p*

• Is the meeting likely to need a dedicated minute-taker?
  • Person identified to take minutes
  • Has someone been identified to take minutes?
  • Person is available and has agreed to take minutes
  • Has the minute-taker seen the guidelines for taking minutes?
  • Minute-taker has seen guidelines
  • Is the minute-taker familiar with the agenda?

• Might there be one or more professional who needs particular training, support or management during the meeting?
  • Identify and provide the necessary training, management and or/support.

### ON THE DAY OF THE MEETING

• Is meeting room set up?
  • Sufficient seating
  • Acceptable temperature
  • Action taken to prevent interruptions
  • Meeting arranged to facilitate positive communication e.g. professionals not all seated facing parent/s and chairs are the same height

• Would it be helpful to type up and distribute the agenda?

• Have any questions/concerns raised in advance by attendees been included in the agenda?

• Have any late reports/documents to share been photocopied?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>• Is the meeting likely to be highly charged or very contentious?</th>
<th>• Ensure familiarity with meeting ‘Code of Conduct’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>• Have the minutes been typed up and distributed?</th>
<th>• Minutes distributed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>• Have the points agreed in the meeting been actioned?</th>
<th>• Post-meeting Action Record completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>• Have non-attendees who haven’t given apologies been contacted?</th>
<th>• Contact made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| • Has a note been made of any non-attendees with reasons? Does this information need to be taken into account when planning future meetings/making appointments? | • Note added to school records |
Form to Send to Parents in Preparation for Meeting

Dear (parent/carer's name),

We are planning to hold a meeting on (date and time) to discuss ____. We have set aside one hour for the meeting. A decision to hold a meeting was taken because ____. You are welcome to invite your partner, family member or a friend to attend with you, for support.

We have invited (names of professional/s) to attend the meeting.

To help ensure that the meeting fully considers all the relevant issues, we would be grateful if you could complete this form and return it to school.

Yours sincerely,

(name)

--- Meeting Agenda Return Slip ---

Child's name:       Date of meeting:

I would like those attending the meeting to know:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

I would like to make sure that there is time to discuss:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

I would like the following question/s to be answered:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Letter to Professional ahead of Meeting

Dear (name),

Re: (name of child)

I am writing to request your involvement at a meeting being held on (date) at (name of school). The aim of the meeting is to (reason - e.g., set up a PSP). The decision to call a meeting has been taken because (reason for calling meeting – e.g. in the last few weeks there has been a change in behaviour resulting in two internal exclusions); although at the moment the reason for this change is unclear.

In view of the fact that you have (reason for requesting attendance – e.g. been providing regular support to (child’s name) your attendance at the meeting is requested/your attendance at the meeting is considered essential.

If a report is being requested

As (reason for requesting report e.g. this is the first PSP meeting for name of child) it would be helpful to have a written report from you, * which (reason – e.g. summarises his/her progress + time e.g. this half-term/since you began offering support). We would be grateful if your report could be forwarded to school by (date - one week ahead of meeting?), as this will allow time for reports to be circulated to those attending in preparation for the meeting.

* Please see attached sheet outlining the types of comments that experience indicates can be unhelpful.

For your information, the following people have also been invited to attend the meeting: (list).

As things stand, it is anticipated that we will need to address the following questions: (list, e.g. What additional support could the school/your service offer the child at School Action +? /Who else might become involved at this stage/ Does the child’s IEP need revising? /Has anything happened that can help to explain the downturn in child’s behaviour?).

If, on the basis of your knowledge of (child’s name), you can either recommend any further questions that should be added to the meeting agenda for discussion, or, suggest any additional professionals who should be invited to attend, then please notify me.

In the event of your being unable to attend the meeting, I would be grateful if you could inform the school by (date e.g. 1st October/as soon as possible).

Yours sincerely,

(name)
Guidelines for Professional Reports

Professionals’ reports can be produced to fulfil a number of functions. This can make them difficult to interpret at times; particularly when, which is often the case, there is more than one agency involved in supporting a particular child. The confusion that results, either from unclear and/or conflicting assessments, or advice, can create anxiety both for parents and education practitioners, and can, at times, undermine potentially helpful action and partnership working.

Evidence indicates that confusion can be minimised where a) technical terms are explained e.g. what is meant by dyslexia, bright, above average b) opinions are clearly evidenced-based and, where this is not the case, the limitations of the opinions are clearly stated, e.g. the fact that they are based on limited information, or a lack of knowledge about things such as the child’s progress or provision and c) a complete description of the assessment/s and findings upon which recommendations for a particular course of action are being made are included in the report. This is particularly important in situations where the course of action being recommended might be anticipated to be notably different to that being recommended by other professionals working with the particular child, or where the research evidence, more generally, would point to a different course of action being preferable.

Below are some examples, taken from professionals’ reports that highlight the types of conclusions and recommendations that have been found to be unhelpful, for one or more of the reasons outlined above.

Assessment Statements:

- “The Bangor Dyslexia Test shows clear evidence of dyslexia” (6/10).
- Overall, X exhibits a classic dyslexic profile, with tests of general ability scoring significantly higher than tests of literacy attainments.
- X emerged from present testing as a child of average abilities overall in verbal reasoning areas, but of bright potential.
- In view of X’s superior level of general intellectual ability, his attainments in basic skills, may be expected to be at similar levels.
- Further investigation is needed into additional possible inhibitors of learning.
- X’s receptive vocabulary score was 101, giving an age equivalent of 9.2yrs, and a range of 8.6 – 9.10 years. This score confirms his parents’ feeling about him that he is of average ability.
Although the latter (literacy attainment) are around age level, general ability is at the “bright” level.

This profile of weak areas is consistent with a diagnosis of Dyslexia, which is constitutional in origin.

During the lesson, X looked as though he was functioning at least two years behind his chronological age.

X appears to be of normal intellect.

**Action Advice:**

- X would benefit from receiving specialist, individual tuition each week.
- X will need an extra time concession of 25% in examinations in his school career… (pupil aged 9 yrs).
- It will also be worth pressing them (school) to arrange a statement for X.
- Among items of equipment and software considered to be potentially valuable in helping X to develop basic skills ….. are the use of a personal computer and printer.
- X’s attitude to work was impressive throughout my assessment today, revealing tenacious achievement motivation that augurs well for future academic learning, hopefully at a grammar school.
- X’s parents should continue with private tuition at the XXXX Centre in XXXX.
- X will require individual teaching on a one-to-one basis for three lessons a week from an experienced teacher who has undertaken a training such as the OCR Diploma in SpLD or who holds an AMBDA qualification, or the equivalent.
- It is difficult to see how X has survived this long in a mainstream school without a statement.
Letter to Professional Sending Report/s

Dear (name),

Re: (child’s name and date of birth)

As you know, a meeting is being held at school on (date) to discuss _____. We have set aside one hour for the meeting.

(Name of professional/s) has prepared a report for the meeting, a copy of which is enclosed.

We look forward to seeing you on (date and time).

Yours sincerely,

(name)

Encs.
Letter to Parent/carer sending Professional Report/s for Meeting

Dear (name),

Re: (child’s name and date of birth)

As you know, a meeting is being held at school on (date) to discuss _____.

(Name of professional/s) has prepared a report for the meeting, a copy of which is enclosed. It would be helpful if you could read through it before the meeting. Do let me know if you have any questions about the report/s.

We look forward to seeing you on (date and time).

Yours sincerely,

(name)

Encs.
## MEETING NOTES

Date: 
Present: 
Chair: 
Minute-taker: 
Venue: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUE</th>
<th>SUMMARY</th>
<th>ACTION AGREED /BY WHOM /WHEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apologies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Minutes and Matters Arising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date of Next Meeting: 
Chair: 
Scribe: 
Venue: 
Time: 

A BUCKINGHAMSHIRE SCHOOL
Dear (name),

Re: child’s name and information

Please find enclosed a copy of the minutes from the meeting which took place on (date).

At the moment these are in draft form, to give people the opportunity to read through them. Should you notice any inaccuracies or omissions in the content, please notify me, in writing, by (date).

On (date) these minutes will become a final record of the meeting.

Yours sincerely,

(name)

Enc.
Post-Meeting Action Record - Blank

Name of Child:

Date of Meeting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>By Date</th>
<th>Resulting Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Complaint Form

**Personal Information**

Your name:

Pupil's name and class:

Your relationship to the pupil:

**Complaint Details**

Please give details of your complaint:

When did the issue/s about which you are complaining first arise?

**Previous Action**

What steps, if any, have you taken to try and resolve the issue/s about which you are complaining?

With whom did you raise the concerns?

What actions were taken? 
If action was taken, what effect did it have?
Moving Forward

What action, or actions, do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, give details.

Signature:

Date:

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom: