



Devon
Primary Care Trust



Education Advocacy Tips for Parents/Carers

Introduction

All parents wish for their children to obtain a good education and to fulfil their potential.

Here are some top tips for parents to help parents/carers to get an appropriate education for their child.

General advocacy tips

- Raise any concerns as early as possible with the class teacher.
- Find out who the SENCO (special educational needs co-ordinator) is.
- Find out who the school's Special Educational Needs (SEN) Governor is.
- Obtain the school's SEN policy.
- Keep records of discussions and meetings and a diary of events.
- Keep copies of all letters.
- Send letters recorded delivery or hand deliver them.
- Obtain a copy of the SEN Code of Practice (see end for details).
- Ask to see local authority guidance/policy relating to special educational needs.
- Keep a diary of the child and their difficulties.
- The child, if appropriate, could keep a diary.
- Ensure that any deadlines are strictly adhered to.

Documents

- Always keep originals of any documents sent to the school or Education Service: send photocopies.
- When you receive paperwork check that all documents are included.
- Ask for any missing documents.
- Read through all documents and highlight or make a list of things you agree or disagree with.
- It is helpful to keep a clean copy of paperwork to make notes on.
- Check any paperwork you receive about your child to make sure it gives the correct date of birth etc.

Preparing for meetings

Some general principles apply to preparing for meetings, whether you have a meeting at the school to discuss your child's education, a meeting with the Education Service to discuss a proposed statement, or are attending the annual review meeting.

- Request copies of your child's school record before the meeting.
- Read any reports that have been written about your child and highlight any areas that need clarification or are of concern.
- Mark any relevant sections in the SEN Code of Practice which will emphasise your views.
- Make a list of your views/concerns and any questions.
- If there is anyone you think is relevant and should attend the meeting, ask if they can attend.

- Ask someone to accompany you if possible and let the school/Education Service know that this will happen.
- Use this list during the meeting and tick off points as they are discussed.
- Don't feel pressured to agree to anything.
- Make notes of what is said or, if possible, take someone with you to the meeting to make notes.
- If anything is not clear ask for it to be explained again.
- Make sure that everything you wanted to discuss has been dealt with and go back over points if necessary.
- After the meeting, write a letter to the chairperson, with copies to all present, to confirm your understanding of what was discussed and any action agreed.

Writing letters

- Ensure your letter contains full details of your child, ie name, date of birth, the school your child attends etc.
- Also quote any references, ie tribunal hearing number.
- Always keep a copy of any letter sent.
- Hand deliver or send letters by recorded delivery.
- Wherever possible, address letters personally, ie by using heads/chair of governors name.
- If you are unsure who to write to at the Education Service, always address the letter to the Director of Children and Young Peoples Services, County Hall, Exeter, EX2 4QD.

Useful documents and reading

- Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (Ref: DFES/581/2001)
- SEN Toolkit (Ref: DfES/558/2001)

These can be obtained from:

Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Publications
0845 60 222 60
www.dfes.gov.uk

Further help and information

NAS Autism Helpline on 0845 070 4004

Devon Parent Partnership Service 01392 383080

parentpartnershipservice-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

www.parentpartnershipdevon.org.uk

Thanks to the National Autistic Society for allowing us to reproduce the text of this factsheet.

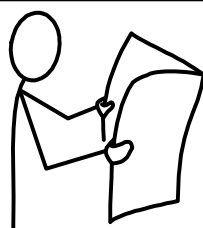
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