



Not Fine in School

Top Tips for Meetings with Professionals & Maintaining Successful Relations

Before the Meeting

- IMPORTANT: Keep a diary of each day and what happens with your child & keep a FILE of notes, emails, letters, and records of conversations and meetings with school staff and medical staff.
- Follow up any verbal conversations with an email summarising the main points.
- Read up on the relevant government guidance documents that schools should be referring to and refer to them yourself if necessary.
- You might find it helpful to contact IPSEA / SOSSEN / Contact helplines for advice before the meeting. Alternatively ask for advice in the NFIS group.
- Read your school's policies for SEND, ATTENDANCE, BEHAVIOUR, and any other relevant topics, check that they are following their own policies in the way they are responding to your child's needs.
- Make a list of items that need to be covered, consider emailing this prior to the meeting.
- Listen to your own instincts and think about what you want to achieve from the meeting.
- Provide evidence for all your points.
- Consider negotiating an agenda with timings for items before the meeting – weirdly you will reach the same decisions without a long protracted discussion.
- Keep in mind that a child's anxiety must be treated/reduced and that is a health issue. The school needs to put educational (social, emotional and mental health) support in place. Only then will things improve. Don't let them try to put all responsibility on you.
- Arrange to take an advocate / representative so that there is a witness, they will also help everyone stay calm. This could be a friend or family member or a representative from SENDIASS or similar service/charity.
- Write down, or ask your child to write down, their feelings and opinions - to represent their voice during the meeting

During the Meeting

- ✓ Smile and be assertive
- ✓ Talk clearly and calmly - Lower your voice and breathe, talk from your core
- ✓ Try to avoid becoming emotional (but do take some tissues)
- ✓ Be honest, genuine and be yourself – as a parent you have a valid contribution to make as an equal partner in the meeting
- ✓ No swearing or aggressive behaviour
- ✓ Maintain your professionalism – keep your cool
- ✓ Ask people to call you by your name if they refer to you as 'mum' or dad'
- ✓ Be realistic about what can be achieved in the meeting
- ✓ Ensure that you have clearly understood what is being said to you, if not, ask for points to be repeated and clarified.

- ✓ Make notes or take someone with you to take notes.
- ✓ Remember, they won't have all the answers, they may not know what to do either, let them admit this.
- ✓ Agree an action plan with responsibilities for all parties.
- ✓ Do not agree to anything you are unsure about/feel is unachievable.. ask for time to consider and seek advice on any points of concern.
- ✓ You may find it helpful to ask for references to the relevant research or publications that have been consulted when recommending a course of action, so that you can understand the thinking behind it.
- ✓ Explore all options – Do you need to apply for an EHCP? Have the school involved the Educational Psychologist & consulted the Local Authority & local offer for options or EOTAS?.
- ✓ At the end of the meeting check that everyone is clear about what has been agreed – confirm your understanding, 'So, let me just clarify, we have agreed to...'
- ✓ Ask for minutes of the meeting and challenge if necessary / alternatively write your own to reflect what was agreed.
- ✓ Follow up the meeting with an email to thank people for their time.

DISPUTES ABOUT DIAGNOSIS

Sometime professionals will refuse to accept a diagnosis or opinion of another professional. Reflecting the importance of medical diagnosis in relation to a child's short-term and long-term wellbeing we advise parents to ask the school or professional to respond to the following questions in writing:

- Who is responsible for this decision?
- What policy are they following when deciding to ignore expert advice?
- Who is accountable for any harm that occurs as a result of them ignoring medical advice?
- Are they willing to contact the expert who carried out the assessment (or a representative of the team that carried it out) so that they can talk through their observations, assessments and conclusions?

HELPFUL RESOURCES

SENDIASS <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/information-advice-and-support-services-network/find-your-local-ias-service>

IPSEA <https://www.ipsea.org.uk>

SOS! SEN <http://www.sossen.org.uk>

Contact <https://contact.org.uk/advice-and-support/>

YOUNG MINDS http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for_parents

NAS EDUCATION RIGHTS HELPLINE <http://www.autism.org.uk/services/helplines/education-rights.aspx>

CHILD LAW ADVICE <http://childlawadvice.org.uk>

NOT FINE IN SCHOOL <http://www.notfineinschool.org.uk>

KIDSCAPE (Bullying) <https://www.kidscape.org.uk>

Education and attendance information from your council <https://www.gov.uk/education-attendance-council>

SCOTLAND: <http://enquire.org.uk/>

WALES: <https://contact.org.uk/media/380068/senwales.pdf>

NORTHERN IRELAND: <http://www.senac.co.uk/>

GUIDANCE: Illness and Your Child's Education

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>

GUIDANCE: Ensuring a Good Education for Children who Cannot Attend School Because of Health Needs

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269469/health_needs_guidance_-_revised_may_2013_final.pdf

GUIDANCE: Mental Health & Behaviour in Schools

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2>

GUIDANCE: Parental Responsibility Measures (school attendance)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance>

GUIDANCE: School Attendance (registers and codes)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

GUIDANCE: GP support for school pupils with medical conditions

<https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/employment/gp-practices/service-provision/supporting-pupils-at-school>

GUIDANCE: Use of Reasonable Force (Physical Restraint) in Schools

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools>

GUIDANCE: School Complaints Procedures

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures>

GUIDANCE: Accessing Pupil Information <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/schools/pupils-info/>

GUIDANCE: What are Special Educational Needs?

https://www.senexpertsolicitors.co.uk/imagelib/SEN_factsheets/What_are_SEN_factsheet.pdf

GUIDANCE: SEND Guide for Parents <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-parents-and-carers>

GUIDANCE: Disability Discrimination <http://inclusivechoice.com/ParentBook.pdf>

GUIDANCE: Statutory Policies for Schools

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/357068/statutory_schools_policies_Sept_14_FINAL.pdf

GUIDANCE: Home-to-School Travel and Transport

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance>

GUIDANCE: Bullying (for Schools) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>

Local Government Ombudsman scroll down the list for 'Out of school...out of mind' (2011/2016) <http://www.lgo.org.uk>

CEREBRA – Guides for Parents <https://www.cerebra.org.uk/help-and-information/guides-for-parents/>

HUB OF HOPE – find your local services and settings <https://hubofhope.co.uk>

ANNA FREUD CENTRE FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES <http://www.annafreud.org>