

Words Have Power

Parents/carers of children with SEND in Bury tell us the importance of the language you use during meetings and when talking about their child's strengths and needs.

As you can imagine, knowing your child is experiencing difficulties or requiring additional support in any area of their life is going to be upsetting and worrying. It can also be very isolating.

Parent/carers shared with us that one of the most important things school staff can do is to acknowledge and appreciate parent/carer's experience and listen to any difficulties they report.

It can be anxiety inducing for parents/carers to ask for a meeting with school staff. It can therefore feel very disempowering if concerns are not acknowledged, especially as we know children do present differently in different environments. For example, children may only feel emotionally safe to share their worries or anxieties at home.

Parents/carers share **the most powerful thing school staff can do is listen to them**; they know their child best and what they need most is to know that there is someone in school who understands their child and will advocate on their child's behalf (as needed) during the school day.

Parents/carers consistently share they have felt most supported by SENCOs and school staff when adults in school they have got to know their child, when support feels collaborative, when they feel heard and listened to.

Parents/carers share that it is helpful to follow the 'dos' and 'don'ts' on the following page.

This document was co-produced with Bury parents and carers as part of the development of Bury's SEND Graduated Approach Toolkit (2021-22)

Do

- ✓ Have an **accurate, up to date** and **accessible** SEN Information Report which outlines what parents/carers can expect if they or the school have any concerns
- ✓ **Signpost** to local support or national charities, as this helps them to feel less alone
- ✓ Have **leaflets** for Bury2Gether easily available, alongside any local parent/carer forum information.
- ✓ **Ask for parents/carers view**, ideas, and suggestions
- ✓ **Listen** to and **acknowledge** their concerns at an appropriate and pre-organised time
- ✓ Remember the **power of relationships**
- ✓ **Work together**
- ✓ **Recognise** that children's levels of additional need may **vary** over the year and between year groups. It is important support plans reflect this
- ✓ Find a **compromise**
- ✓ Have someone who can **understand** if they have their own needs and support them to understand processes / advocate for them.
- ✓ **Ask helpful questions** that involve the parent, e.g. what do you feel like you need?
- ✓ **Remember** parents/carers of children with SEND may be sensitive to questions around their parenting abilities

Don't

- × **Minimise** parents/carers experiences by saying things like 'well we don't see that in school'
- × **Judge** parents by using terms like 'they've been absolutely fine in school today' (following a tricky night / parent feeding back that child has been difficult at home)
- × **Use terms which lack sensitivity** 'we think there's something wrong with your child'; 'middle child syndrome'
- × **Discuss** children in front of other parents or other pupils, for example at the door to the school/class on the way in
- × **Make assumptions** about parenting abilities
- × **Give out misinformation or perpetuate myths around SEN;** parents/carers would rather wait a little to get the correct information than receive incorrect information