

Working with Stakeholders

By Jennie Matthews

When working to support pupils with special needs or disabilities, we work with a variety of other stakeholders. During my time as a SENDCo I have worked with local GPs and specialised doctors and nurses from a variety of departments such as the child development centre. Regular external agencies I work with include the ear, nose and throat department, audiology team, cleft palate team, school nurses, ophthalmologists, autism assessment team, the visual impairment and hearing impairment team and speech and language therapists and language development workers.

It is imperative to engage with these services to ensure the pupils are able to access the correct provision and learning environments to enable them to succeed. For example, we have several pupils in the school who are hearing impaired. The hearing impairment team regularly visit the school to advise on top tips for those pupils in different lessons, from the lighting, seating position and correct use of radio aids. We are able to use the knowledge we have gained to help other pupils as soon as they begin to attend our school, to ensure the pupil is able to engage in all lessons as soon as they walk through the door.

Communication is key when working with other stakeholders. There may be times when you need to do a bit of detective work and knowing who to contact and having good relationships means a faster result for the child.

Including parents/carers, and the pupil themselves, in the process is key to being able to contact the right people. By having all the information from all the individuals involved in the pupil's life, you will be able to get a fully rounded picture of any support that needs to be in place, which will ultimately mean the pupil is able to progress in their education.

It is important to be aware that some parents/carers will have very little experience with the SEND process and external agencies. Likewise, they may have a wealth of knowledge that can be shared with and learned from. Regular meetings should be held with parents/carers to ensure knowledge and information can be gathered, as well as working together to ensure the child's voice is included. An open-door policy will also help parents/carers in feeling empowered to approach staff with any information rather than waiting for time specified meetings.