

Glyne Gap School

Curriculum Guideline 3 (CG3): Working with Families

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1. Introduction

A child's parents are the first, longest and most important educator!

Much has been written about the need to work with parents. There are a range of reasons to work with parents that ranged from it being a consumer right to the usefulness of an unpaid helper in school. Some commentators have emphasised the needs of parents of disabled children. Relevant as these issues may be, our philosophy underpinning 'our' work with parents is based on a clear and simple belief:

The most effective learning takes place when school and home work together.

The school believes learning is the fundamental vehicle that will enable our pupils to become independent, autonomous and self determining people and this will determine their later quality of life. Effective learning is thus the central reason for our work with parents and notions of counselling, support and guidance are not within our professional mission. (There may be exceptions to this general rule - for instance the terminal nature of a child's condition).

This policy and guidelines are meant to state our guiding principles and act as a reference for agreed practice. Throughout this policy we have used the term 'parents' for ease of reading, however this policy refers to anyone who has responsibility for our pupils, e.g. foster carers, guardians, other family members.

2. Communication

Establishing and maintaining good communication between home and school will often determine the quality of our joint working arrangements. The class teacher is the key person as far as school is concerned.

i) **Home/School books**

In questionnaires to parents the home/school book is simply the most valued of home/school arrangements. All pupils in the school will have a book that passes between home and school daily. When pupils have moved to Further Education the home/school book will be discussed at review - it may be that older students and their parents agree that the book is no longer wanted/needed. Occasionally some parents will feel a written means of communication does not suit them - an alternative means will be used instead. Some pupils will benefit from using a Big Mack or Step by Step Communication aid to share news between home and school.

ii) **Newsletter**

We are committed to producing a newsletter which covers such things as news of events in school, activities experienced by classes, and tips for parents. The newsletter will be circulated 6 times a year. In addition parents should expect to receive a class newsletter from at the beginning of each big term.

iii) **Open door policy**

Parents are welcome to come into school at any time. If there is a particular reason we suggest that parents make an appointment to ensure that the people who need to be seen are available. The Headteacher gives parents the highest priority in her working day and will aim to respond to a request or enquiry the same working day. If she has no previous appointments she will see parents immediately. On rare occasions parents over use the open door policy taking teachers' time away from other pupils. The Headteacher will be informed if this occurs and she will discuss the issue with those concerned. The primary role of teachers is to teach pupils so they will often be unable to take phone calls from parents during the school day. On occasions when a teacher is unable to take a phone call, they will make every effort to return the call promptly.

iv) **Welcome Pack for new pupils**

Families of new pupils will receive a welcome pack prior to starting school. The pack contains lots of information about life in school as well as some forms to complete to ensure that we know as much about the pupil as we can. (See Appendix 1 for contents)

v) **Home Visits**

A number of staff, including the Home Learning Specialists, make home visits periodically - this is often at a parent's request - to discuss something in detail in an informal atmosphere. The Headteacher offers a home visit to all new pupils some three months or so after admission. The Nursery teacher makes a home visit to all new nursery pupils on admission. (See Appendix 1 Guidelines for Home Visits)

3. Arrangements to Facilitate Learning

It is clear from our experience and our questionnaires that different parents want different levels of partnership. The school will always endeavour to accommodate all levels.

The following outlines what the school will always do for every pupil:

i) Supergoals

Each pupil is set a Supergoal which is transformational and sets a direction of travel for pupil learning. This is set in discussion with parents to determine what the priority learning is for each child. Progress with Supergoals will be discussed at Annual Review meetings, in terms of the current learning focus towards achieving them both at school and at home. At least one termly goal will be linked to the pupil's Supergoal.

ii) Termly goals

Each term the class teacher will draft a set of goals for each pupil. Termly goals are a series of clear, unambiguous, incisively relevant statements of intent about what priority Tier 1 skills a pupil will achieve by the end of term. They will be skills the pupil cannot do now but will be able to demonstrate by the end of term. These goals will be sent home at the beginning of term for parental comment/suggestion etc. At the end of term the goals will be sent home again with the teacher's evaluation of how successful or otherwise the pupil has been. With the evaluated goals parents will be asked if they wish to suggest anything that might be included in the next terms goals. (See CG1: Teaching and Learning).

iii) Monitoring and Recording Activities

The class teacher may write to parents asking if they would like to be involved in planning or monitoring a particular skill at home. This could mean coming into school to watch the skill being practised and devising a home recording system. Such 'homework' is extended and changed as agreed.

iv) Reading books

Where a child is using a reading book, parents will be encouraged to support their child by hearing them read, helping them and asking them questions about the text, the current reading book with a record will go home at an agreed frequency.

v) Specialist help and advice

The school has certain trained and qualified staff to help with particular areas which require very specialist knowledge. This can be accessed through their child's class teacher, Head of School or through Annual review meetings. The specialist may work in conjunction with the Home Learning Specialist.

vi) Annual Review Meetings

The formal review meeting is an annual meeting which statutorily reviews the pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan. At that meeting progress and achievement are discussed through the Annual review Report. All involved parties, including parents and therapists, are encouraged to submit a report. Transition plans for the future are also discussed and support offered.

vii) Transition arrangements

When pupils move classes across the school it can be exciting as well as a time of great challenge, for both pupils and their parents, because of the degree of changes involved. It is essential to keep pupils at the heart of the moving process and, as such, a detailed process of transition has been devised. Parents will receive notification from their child's Head of School of when their child will be changing class, which will detail the transition programme their child will follow. Each child's class team will produce a 'moving up' book which is written in the style of an extended social story designed to be shared with pupils and their families. The school will also facilitate a coffee morning in the term prior to the pupil moving to enable parents to come into school and meet with each other and staff.

viii) Positive Behaviour for Learning

For some pupils this is the key area of learning as it significantly impacts on the quality of someone's life. Agreeing similar expectations and ensuring consistency in applying rewards and sanctions is of vital importance. This may be informally agreed or become the subject of a planning meeting resulting in an Individual Pupil Arrangement (IPA). (See CG7: Promoting Positive Attitudes and Good Behaviour).

ix) Safeguarding

At the heart of our philosophy is the belief that we are a school where everyone is treated with dignity, respect and is of equal worth. Learning and personal development takes place in a climate of trust and confidence and everyone has a responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. We have a curriculum which is proactive in its approach to keeping pupils and young people safe as well as a comprehensive policy (CG2) and regular safeguarding training for staff.

4. Information about Progress

i) Formal reporting

Before each Annual Review the class teacher will write a comprehensive report covering all aspects of the pupil's work, progress and achievements. The report will also include a reference to the assessment instrument known as the Glyne Gap Assessment Scales which have been achieved by the pupil in the curricular areas of Communication, PSHE, Literacy, Maths, Science, and ICT. The report may also include contributions from specialist teachers and Therapists.

ii) Termly Goals

As previously indicated, at the end of each term goals being worked on during the term will be evaluated – this will then be sent home.

iii) Certificates and National Accreditation

Throughout their time at school pupils will have many opportunities to be awarded certificates. Some of these are linked to the school's checklists e.g. Soft Play. Additional special merit and challenge awards for named activities are also awarded. Pupils may be nominated for Worker of the Week Award for significant achievement. Parents will always be specially invited into assembly if their child is to be given this.

As a school careful consideration has been given to the extent in which success in qualifications and awards demonstrates that pupils have made progress in their skills, knowledge or understanding, and whether the award or qualification meets their individual needs. Therefore the National Accredited Awards currently available for pupils that can provide opportunities to demonstrate impact on learning are:

- ASA swimming awards, duckling, rainbow, water skills and distance awards
- Winstrada Rebound Therapy
- RDA Horse Riding
- Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award

iv) Zigzag Books

Each child has a Zigzag book which is a photographic record of progress covering their entire time at the school. These are made available for parents to see at Annual Review meetings but parents can request to see them at any time. When a pupil leaves the school, these Zigzag books become the property of that child and their family.

v) Progress Files

Students in the Further Education Faculty have a Progress File which is accumulated over their time at the Faculty. Similar to Zigzag books, these are records of progress built up from photographs, certificates and pieces of work. Where appropriate, students contribute to their own Progress Files. When students leave the Faculty, these Progress Files become the property of that young person and their family.

vi) Assessment

At certain times formal assessment of pupils may take place. If this is by an external person e.g. Educational Psychologist, parents are always informed and invited to discuss findings. Parents are always fully involved in any decision making that may be the result of an assessment process. (See Curriculum Guidelines 7).

vii) Daily Progress

The daily exchange of information in the home/school book will give parents

immediate information about success and achievement. **The school believes celebrating achievements is a fundamental foundation to successful learning.**

5. Training and Development

There is a 3 year strategic development plan which is devised in consultation with parents as part of the school development plan. Developments around working with families are based on information given by parents identifying their needs and linked to their child's learning. Current developments outlined in the plan are establishing a regular parent café providing information for parents on a specific topic, developing parent activities/tools to support and enable parents to deliver learning at home, and bespoke training for parents as and when it is needed.

6. Supporting Organisations

There are a number of organisations that may be of support to families. Parents should refer specific requests for information to their child's class teacher or Head of School, who may be able to point them in the right direction.

7. Complaints / Disputes

i) Complaints by parents

Parents are encouraged to air problems early; in the first instance to the person most closely involved, usually the class teacher. Should they feel that their problem has not been solved, they should contact their child's Head of School or the Headteacher. Further information on the complaints procedure can be found in the Complaints Policy, which is available on the school website.

Should parents be unhappy about their child's Education, Health and Care Plan (or Statement of Special Educational Needs), then there is a well-documented route of appeal through the LEA and ending, if necessary with the independent SEN tribunal.

ii) Complaints about / Disputes with Parents

Occasionally staff may feel they have cause to complain about a parent. In the case of disputes, staff are advised to remain courteous at all times but not to accept verbal or physical abuse under any circumstances. The same sequence of actions applies as the preceding bullet point- problems to be aired early and if no resolution go through to the next stage i.e. class teacher, Headteacher, Governors and/or LEA Officers.

8. Parental Rights to Withdraw

Parents may request that their child be withdrawn from collective acts of worship and from any part of the Relationships and Sex Education programme - other than those elements which are statutory (see CG6: PSHE). Parents will always be encouraged to discuss fully with the class teacher or Head of School any such decisions.

9. Equal Opportunities

As stated in the school's Equality Policy, we are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and community cohesion between people within the local community. As such, the school will endeavour to meet, and be receptive to, the cultural sensitivities in our work with families. Where a pupil's home language is not English, parents will be consulted on any support they might need and the school will endeavour to provide that support, for example providing translations and translators if needed.

10. Parents' Contribution to School Development Planning

Parents are invited to complete questionnaires and contribute in other ways to strategic school development planning during the three yearly whole school development planning consultation.

11. Extended and Social Opportunities

We believe that it is important to have a sense of belonging to a community and for parents and families to share fun with their child or young person. To facilitate this we have regular opportunities such as Family Days (an opportunity for families to socialise with each other whilst enjoying the school facilities, such as the swimming pool, soft play, trampolining, adventure playground etc) and Legend Club Night (an opportunity for families of our older pupils to socialise through a club night based at school) and opportunities for siblings and the extended family to join in with whole school events such as the Church Carol Service, Sports Day etc. These occasions give an important opportunity for families to meet, socialise and get to know each other. Some of the social occasions also involve the families of our own staff to enable a real breadth of relationships to develop.

12. Portage Partnership

The aim of the partnership is to provide a home visiting service which offers support, help and advice to families with children with additional needs. Parents will play a significant role in the child's development and together will work towards reaching the child's maximum potential. Portage is offered to parents when children are identified at the Nursery Liaison meeting or direct requests from parents who have heard about the Service. It is not an essential requirement that the children will be future Glyne Gap Nursery pupils.

This service works from the home with Home Visitors listening and appreciating the views of the Parents on the child's future development. It is a service, which can be tailored to the needs of the child and aims to enhance their abilities and existing skills. Developmental Checklists covering the aspects of Physical/motor skills, Cognitive (thinking skills), Language skills, socialisation skills and self-help skills are used to celebrate what the child can already do and identify areas on which to work together.

It is important to initially meet with the Parents to discuss whether they believe a service such as Portage is right for the child, once this has been established a plan of action can be

agreed. If it is agreed that this is the right type of service, fortnightly visits will be arranged with the Parents.

The main principle of the portage partnership is to build on the abilities and strengths, rather than focusing on difficulties. We firmly believe that a child can make significant progress, when education and families work in partnership.

13. Home Learning Specialists

The aim of these specialist members of staff is to support and encourage pupil's learning to be connected between home and school. This will enable the quality of a pupil's life, their happiness and independence to have the very best opportunity for success.

There are several references throughout this policy as to how these specialists will work in supporting pupils and their families. Access to support from these members of staff will usually be through the class teacher/Head of School. Often Annual Reviews will act as a catalyst for support.

Related Policies

This document should be read in conjunction with a number of other policy documents, particularly:

CG1 Teaching and Learning
CG2 Safeguarding and Child Protection
CG6 Personal, Social and Health Education
CG7 Supporting Positive Attitudes and Good Behaviour
CG10 Assessment, Recording and Reporting
Complaints Policy

February 2018

Appendix 1 Guidelines for Home Visits

Introduction

Working with parents and families is an absolutely core element of the school's work. It is therefore highly desirable that many staff will want and need to visit families at home for a variety of reasons. The following guidelines are not designed to hamper or create an obstacle to their visits taking place. They are simply a means of providing a framework for visits and of keeping the staff that make such visits safe.

Reasons for making a home visit

There are no prescribed reasons for making a home visit other than to progress the interests of a pupil and his/her family.

A number of people may wish to make a home visit and there is no restriction on who can make such visits providing it is in the interest of the pupil!

Procedure to follow when making a home visit

- Make sure your visit is in the electronic school diary.
- Arrange to let one person (e.g. office staff, class teacher etc) know when you leave for your home visit, and let the same person know when you have completed the visit (this could be by phone).
- Carry a mobile phone with you – switched on – and make sure the person you informed has the number.
- If you feel at all uncomfortable in a home based meeting, make an excuse and leave.
- Always make a brief written note of your visit and file it.

Appendix 2 Glyne Gap School Welcome Pack

Contents

- Welcome letter from the head
- School term dates
- Who's Who at Glyne Gap School
- List of useful numbers
- Things your child will need to bring to school
- School Uniform details of where to purchase
- Family day introduction
- Family day upcoming dates
- Holiday Club introduction & contact details
- Transport information of how to apply
- School meals letter
- School meals application form
- Pupil sickness information
- Frequently asked questions
- How can I help my child communication at home
- Reporting pupil information to school office
- Request for emergency information
- School questionnaire
- Pupils ability form 'I can' for class teacher
- Consent form for Buccal Midazolam
- Consent form for Rectal Diazepam
- Consent for school to administer medications
- Consent form for school outings and Photos
- Consent form for Physical Education
- Consent for Speech & Language
- Home school agreement