

Questions to ask the SENCO

» Introduction

This guide has been produced to help you when you are meeting a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) for the first time at your child's school or when your child is going into a new school.

It explains briefly what a SENCO does within a school or setting and what questions you may want to ask to find out how they can best meet your child's needs. Keeping clear, friendly and honest lines of communication with the SENCO is crucial as they are an important part of your child's education.

» Meeting the SENCO

This is usually needed when your child is starting a new school or if you have been told that the school has identified that your child has Special Educational Needs (SEN). We recommend meeting the SENCO when:

- Transferring from one school to another - this can be stressful for parents and children. It is likely that you may be more anxious if your child has SEN or a disability.
- Starting school- your child's introduction to his or her new school is likely to be more successful if you have planned it.
- You have concerns – don't let these grow. Talk to the SENCO sooner rather than later.

» The SENCO

This is short for Special Educational Needs Coordinator. Every school and early years setting must have a SENCO.

The role of the SENCO is to take day-to-day responsibility for ensuring that children have their special needs met.

It is sensible to visit the school you want your child to attend (or are considering) well before the start date. The person who is likely to be able to answer your questions is the SENCO.

It helps if you consider the questions you want answered before the meeting with the SENCO. Write your questions down and check that you have asked everything before you leave.

It might be useful to take someone with you to any meeting you arrange.

It is important that you share information about your child with the SENCO. You might want to take relevant reports and your child's statement if he or she has one.

» Questions to Ask

All children are different and your child's needs will be unique. There will therefore be some questions which only apply to your child.

There will be questions which should be suitable for most people. These might include:

1. Ask about the school SEN policy, School SEN Information Report or Local Offer - the SENCO should be able to give you a copy. There might be other policies which would be relevant and which you could ask about. These could be:
 - The school anti-bullying policy
 - The school behaviour/discipline policy
2. Ask how the school organises its special needs provision. Do they have special classes? Are children withdrawn from class for extra lessons in small groups? How does the school use its support staff-are there non-teaching staff working in classrooms to support children's learning?
3. Ask what training the staff have received. This might be individual or as a whole staff.
4. All children with special needs should have an individual education plan (IEP) or may have a One Plan. Ask to see an example of this. Ask how often IEP's are reviewed and ask if you or your child can be involved in those reviews.
5. Schools are becoming increasingly skilled at meeting special needs. Ask if the school has experience of working with children with difficulties similar to your child's and whether it was successful.

Make a list of all the questions you want to ask and take it with you to the meeting (See our leaflet - 'preparing for meetings' for further information).

Remember! Some SENCO's have a full teaching timetable as well as their SENCO responsibilities. This may mean that there is a delay in them getting back to you, or that they ask you to meet them before or after school or during lunchtime.

» Have your say

Please let us know any comments you may have about this leaflet by contacting the Information, advice and Support Service using the contact details below.

Alternatively you can write to us at:

Hartlepool Information, Advice and Support Service
Hartlepool Borough Council
Children's and Joint Commissioning Services
Level 4, Victoria Road
Hartlepool
TS24 8AY

Further copies of this and other leaflets are available from the Information, Advice and Support Service.

This leaflet is also available in large print on request.

» Data Protection

Although we are part of Hartlepool Borough Council, any record we make of your contact with us is confidential to the Information, Advice and Support Service except where you agree to us talking with other agencies, or if a child is at risk.

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