

# The Consultation Process: A Guide for Teachers



## What is consultation?

Consultation is a process based on a plan-do-review framework. It works at the individual, group and whole school level. It is a solution focussed process which aims for agreed actions. It is collaborative and is inclusive of teachers, parents and pupils.

## What are the benefits?

Consultation is found to be a positive experience by SENCos, teachers, parents and other professionals. It can make the concerns feel shared, with shared solutions. When staff work together to improve children's learning, development and achievement, the amount of preventative work increases, and bureaucracy reduces. Positive benefits include:

- Parents feel supported and report positively on the collaborative work.
- Teachers' problem-solving skills are enhanced by their involvement in consultation meetings, and they report increased professional skills.
- Gains generalise to other children in the class as a result of increased teacher effectiveness.
- Whole school achievement increases.
- Salford's SEN panel consider it good practice to have engaged in a preventative practice such as this prior to requesting formal assessment.

## What does the consultation process look like?

### ***'PLAN' stage involves:***

Consultation with teachers, parents and pupils to identify and gain a shared understanding of the main concerns and identify initial actions to address those concerns.

### ***'DO' stage involves:***

Putting in place strategies agreed in the consultation, which may include:

- School staff gathering assessment information, e.g. observation, completing questionnaires, academic assessments and so on.
- EP carrying out observation, assessment, or gathering information from staff through the use of questionnaires.
- Referrals to other agencies.



### ***'REVIEW' stage involves:***

A joint consultation with EP, parent and teachers, at least six weeks later to review progress towards the actions set at the initial consultation.

## How will I be involved in the process?

There are a number of ways in which teachers are involved in the process. These include:

- Attending meetings and discussing strengths and needs
- Problem solving and generating joint outcomes
- Carrying out assessments or locating records and discussing them with the EP
- Allowing the EP to observe in class
- Completing questionnaires or assessments



## Attending Consultation Meetings - what do I need to do?

Consultation meetings are held throughout the plan-do-review cycle but most commonly at the plan and review stage. They usually last between 1-1.5 hours. In order to gain the most from these meetings it is important that you come prepared with:

- An overview of your concerns about the pupil - some staff find it helpful to make a list of concerns and use the categories of the SEN Code of Practice as a guide, i.e.
  - Cognition and Learning
  - Communication and Interaction
  - Social, Emotional and Mental Health
  - Physical and/or Sensory
- Information about the pupil's strengths and interests
- Up to date information on academic progress and any recent assessment scores
- Information about the strategies and intervention that have been tried prior to EP involvement
- At the review stage, information about the pupil's response and progress towards objectives set at the previous consultation

Consultations are most effective when:

- Each person contributes to the discussion and values the thoughts and opinions of others in the room.
- People are open-minded about what can be achieved and concentrate on finding solutions
- Confidentiality is maintained.



## What will the EP write?

During the consultation, the EP will write consultation notes summarising concerns, and recording actions and next steps. The EP will provide you with a record of the consultation notes but you are encouraged to make a note of any actions you need to take yourself. If the EP carries out assessment at the 'do' stage, then a summary of this will be given. If a formal report is required then this must be negotiated with the EP.

## What is helpful for the SENCo to do as part of the process?

- Arrange for the relevant staff to be released for 1-1.5 hours for the consultations.
- Where possible, attend the meeting together with the teacher. SENCos have a wealth of knowledge and can often bring fresh solutions.
- Ensure a private room is available for the meeting.
- Liaise with parents to ensure their attendance at the meeting.
- Collate assessment information for the meeting.