

Partnership with Parents

Ashley Infant School



What the Judges Said

It was a pleasure to read about the high level of support you offer to parents and their feedback. It would be interesting to hear about how the parents were involved in the training and how it has since developed.

Context

We are a small special needs unit based within a mainstream school. We are located in Ashley near New Milton in the south west of Hampshire. We currently provide education for 19 children aged 4-7 years old, who have complex and severe special educational needs such as Autism, Down Syndrome, Speech and Language difficulties and Developmental Global Delay. Children who attend our setting have a recognised SEN need identified through an Education Health Care Plan and the SEN department at Hampshire County Council place children with us.

Our unit's catchment covers a wide geographical area including the whole of the New Forest area and part of the Waterside area of Southampton. Many of our children are transported to school by minibuss and we do not have daily face to face contact with many of our parents.

We feel the relationship between parents and school is extremely important to develop a full understanding of each child's strength, next steps and valuing every

child's uniqueness. We recognise that being a parent of a child with Special Educational Needs presents parents with an additional range of challenges including coping with their child's medical issues, and behavioural, emotional and sensory needs. We also recognise that parents of Preschool aged children have access to personalised support such as from PORTAGE or SEN advisors. Our parents have reported they miss this level of support when their child starts school. We felt we needed to provide additional support for parents with a variety of support strategies which are presented at a bespoke level or group meetings. Our parents are fully aware of our application and have been involved in providing their viewpoints and opinions to support our application. Our parents shared these views.

"The Resourced provision unit is a lovely warm atmosphere, the classes and surroundings are great for children with learning difficulties"

"I think the Resourced Provision Unit should be nominated due to the fantastic work they do every day"

"The unit is extremely friendly and welcoming. The support that both children and parents receive is fantastic."

"The Resourced team have gone above and beyond helping my son and I"
"The staff are very helpful and friendly, they always strive to provide the best possible education for my son."

"As well as having a huge amount of time for all the children, parents are always encouraged to speak to staff about any issues at home or at school. Nothing is too much trouble and they support parents without judgement"

"As a family the support that we receive from Ashley Infant's is exceptional. They are our first port of call for any issues that we have experienced over the years"

Entry

We have used a wide range of strategies to develop parent's partnerships. Below are just a few of the approaches we have developed with our parents.

As part of a termly and three-year rolling programme, we provide information workshops about the different strategies we successfully use in school. Our workshop subject matter covers: Developing Communication e.g. PEC's, Symbolic Communication and Makaton signing; Coping Strategies incorporating understanding social situations including visual timetables and social stories;

Developing Play and Imagination including Identiplay and Heuristic Play; Understanding Sensory Tolerance and how to develop sensory play. These workshops enable our parents to understand the specialised strategies we use and how they could be of benefit at home. These workshops have been very well received with up to 70% participation. "One of the biggest benefits that the school provide to parents is their expertise. I attended parent sessions about situations which are problematic and which resources we could use at home to support our child. I was helped by creating social stories, now and next charts and worked alongside staff to personalise this to our child's needs. The materials were very helpful and have enabled us to address some of our child's anxieties" Fern Mum of Dan.

Following on from parent's comments which identified they would like some more bespoke support with implementing strategies. We now provide a termly "How can we help session?" Where parents come, and discuss with staff any difficulties they are facing at home and together we come up with practical solutions to address and cope with these needs. "School have helped me many times by making personalised social stories for us at home" Stacie, Mum of Tayo. "Parents are made welcome as well as offering support and advice within home to help with practical solutions with certain issues." Teresa Mum of Tyler. "The team have expert knowledge of forward thinking educational strategies and have helped us to develop strategies within the home setting to cope with challenges that come with having a child with SEN" Amy Mum of Josh.

We keep parents informed about their child's daily successes and any difficulties they have experienced through personalised comments in their home school book. Parents also provide comments back which we can discuss with the child. "The team are very supportive and approachable. Always in contact and at the end of the phone if we need to talk or arrange a visit to discuss any concerns. This is especially important to us as we live a long way away" Melanie Mum of James. "We don't see his teacher daily, but this really isn't a problem as we have really good communication via the home book and we are encouraged to call" Fern Mum of Dan Parents can also view what we have been completing in school through our blog. This aids families to discuss what has been happening in school together. We invite parents to see their child's learning in action through our half termly end of topic events. These have included Chinese New Year celebrations, Easter fun including egg painting, rolling and hunting, also gardening fun to name a few. We also celebrate Harvest and Christmas with an assembly, where every child has a chance to perform on stage. "I very much enjoy going to these events. It is at these times you can see what an amazing job they do with the children and my feelings of

confidence and security in having my precious child (my only one) there have only increased.” Samantha (Mum of Aurora)

We recognise that the excitement and change to routines Birthdays can bring, can sometimes be overwhelming for children and sometimes parties can be too challenging. We arrange a birthday party where every child’s family will come in for a party within class. The birthday boy or girl will have pride of place during our special snack time wearing the birthday hat, receiving a present from their class mates, and of course blowing out the candles on their cake. “They really put thought into the present they got him” Stacey (Mum of Tayo) Our families report that trips out can be very challenging. We organise weekly trips to develop our children’s understanding of social situations. We have been on many trips including finding treasure at the beach, completing forest school activities, visiting the supermarket to buy ingredients for our cooking session, and developing gross motor skills at the play park. “The staff take the children out on regular trips to help develop their social skills. This is a huge benefit to the children and helps family life to run more smoothly.” Caroline (Mum of Ben)

Transition between settings can cause excitement and some uncertainty. For children who are joining our school we build a positive relationship from the start. We have good relationships with Preschools & SEN advisors and they will visit the school with the family. We personalise the transition meetings to every child’s needs. The length and amount of sessions is guided by the child and their family. We provide social stories about starting school including photos of the setting and the staff members. Together we write an ‘all about me’ book to inform staff about each child.

This also provides reassurance for the child while they settle in. We also develop links by completing annual home visits to discuss the child’s needs, motivators and dislikes. This helps establish the child’s understanding that school and home are linked. For children who are leaving our setting we arrange joint meetings for parents and our staff to visit prospective schools together. To support children’s transitions we ensure a familiar member of staff visits the school with the child, we also provide social stories to ease transition.

“Their pastoral care is superb and nothing is a problem, there are ways and means to deal with situations and it is dealt with in a professional and understanding manner.” Fern (Mum of Dan)

