



**Autism
Education
Trust**

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Positive relationships between home and school



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Top tips for working with parents

1. Be sensitive to the needs of the parent. Make sure you take some time to consider where the parent is on their journey.
2. Do not assume that you understand what they are going through.
3. Listen more than you speak. Believe what you are being told. You will be able to gather a great deal of information about your pupil.
4. Ensure the parent feels respected and not judged.
5. Know the Code of Practice and the Equality Act. Some parents have better knowledge of these than school staff.
6. Work to enable everyone who has contact with the child/young person to fully understand their needs. If the parent feels this is not the case, they will soon lose confidence in you.
7. Don't promise things that you are unable to deliver, manage expectations well.
8. Actively involve the parents in all planning towards meeting the child/young person's needs. This will take time but will pay dividends, not only with your relationship with the family, but in enabling you to meet the needs of the child/young person.
9. Focus on the child/young person's strengths as well as their areas for development. Make sure you are extending their strengths and areas of interest as well as supporting their areas of development. This will show the pupil and parents that you are interested in progress in all areas.
10. Parents may have had negative experiences in previous settings or when they were at school themselves. Build a relationship of trust to benefit the child/young person.
11. Work with the parent to establish an effective communication system that works well for all parties. Communicate their child/young person's positive experiences and progress as much as you can, as well as areas where they need support.
12. Think about the language you use and how you present information. Is it accessible? Always avoid jargon.

Ten ways schools can create better learning alignments with parents of autistic students

Staff at the Autism Centre for Education and Research (ACER), University of Birmingham, created a series of videos with parents of autistic students.* Amongst the topics discussed were ways schools can create better learning alignments with parents of autistic students. Here is a quick tip list sharing some of the parents' advice.

1. "I think what would really help, is to work really closely with the parents. That's key and fundamental."
2. "Take onboard all the parents' concerns, if they have any."
3. "Apply a lot of patience and understanding."
4. "Be aware that a lot of things with autism are hidden. So just because you can't see, it doesn't mean that it's not there."
5. "It's difficult for a teacher to do with the pressures they've got. But I think when they see behaviour that they think is negative or they don't understand it, just step back for a second and don't react. I think with the harsh sanctions they have; the teachers are under pressure to react and to get discipline. If you react immediately to what you see as wrong doing, instead of just stepping back and saying, 'Hang on a minute, is there an issue behind this.'"
6. "Really our plea would be for a bit more flexibility, really, of schools acknowledging that if you are trying to get a child gradually back into school on the days that they are not in school, they are still the school's responsibility, their education is still their responsibility and we don't feel they feel that it is."
7. "I'm really sick of hearing 'Well, they're achieving. So there's not a problem'. Schools are focused on grades, and if they're getting the grades, there's not a problem there"
8. "Just to try and remove all their stresses. Don't overload them with the stress. I think if we can try and remove that or, a safe space or something where they can go. I think that's the biggest thing we've learned."
9. "There's a lot more flexibility in the education system at the moment. It would be really good if we could see those changes, that willingness to make changes, that willingness to do things differently, that would be really good if that stayed."
10. "A picture of his TAs, any types of differences that I need to know. And we made a little book. We've done this since reception."



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