

## Build the advocacy skill of parents of children with SEND and increase knowledge of and engagement with



### Background and context

After reviewing their baseline data a school wanted to increase parental engagement with school in order to empower parents to advocate for their child, whilst developing their skills and knowledge.

### What did they do

- Over the year a series of 8 coffee mornings were held, covering a variety of topics and delivered as information sharing sessions, discussion-based groups and interactive workshops in order to skill up parents and increase their knowledge.
- A SEND FSPA scheme launched for parents at the first coffee morning discussing their aims for the year and beyond, as well as asking parents for their views on what would help them through discussion and the initial survey responses.
- An overview of Speech and Language led by the speech and language therapist (SaLT) and mental health support provided by the school counsellor within the school; took place.

Following this a series of sessions was planned across the year until May 2024. These included a session with the SaLT providing advice and information about social communication; an occupational therapy (OT) session with the school's OT champion specifically aimed at early years and SEND parents providing an interactive workshop on building functional skills.

The school counsellor held two meetings, open to all parents focusing on listening to your child to support their needs. Additionally, a discussion-based group around anxiety and stress allowed parents to share their challenges and strategies to support one another.

A session where CONTACT were invited in was particularly successful and well attended. A great deal of information was shared and parents were signposted to further resources and sources of support. This was followed by another session led by school staff on the local offer with interactive online support in order to give parents the skills to access this independently and advocate for their child.

### What was the impact? What changed?

The CONTACT coffee morning in particular strengthened relationships between parents. During the session, parents opened up about difficulties they experience with their child and how sometimes it can be overwhelming caring for a child with SEND. Following the session, a parent only session facilitated by CONTACT was held to support parents with challenges and advocating for their child. Parents requested further time with each other to explore a range of supportive strategies.

One parent wrote an email to the SENCO to say 'The meeting on Tuesday was helpful. It's such a great service! Thanks for introducing me to it.' She has now been to several sessions outside of school meeting with other parents and agencies to gain insight and skills to advocate for her child. She has signed up for online courses to develop her knowledge and feels more confident to face the future as her child transitions to high school.

A parent of child in Year 3 has advocated for their child and sought information regarding difficulties, based on initial information shared at school. Further research and links have been shared back with the school to support their child, and other children.

### Baseline data

- Parents: The school runs workshops and events which support me as a parent of a child with SEND increased from 13% to 67%
- The school provides information and guidance to ensure their child and family can access the services and support they need increased from 30% to 67%
- Staff: Our school provides parents and carers of pupils with SEND with information and support which enables them to be a strong advocate for their child increased from 59% to 78%

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