

Questions to ask your school

If you have concerns about your child/young person's education, you should talk to the class teacher first. Find out what difficulties are they seeing. Maybe they have similar concerns, or they may reassure you that your child/young person is progressing within what is considered normal for their age.

- Explain your concerns. What difficulties do you see at home?
- What do they see at school? Have they noticed any difficulties?
- If they have concerns, have they already put anything in place? What could they do next?

Schools can provide a lot of extra support from within their own resources. All children are different and develop at different rates. Teachers will differentiate the curriculum as part of their normal teaching practice for all pupils (Quality First Teaching). Just because your child/young person requires a little extra help or support doesn't mean they have special educational needs. They may just need some short-term support to help learn a new skill they are struggling with.

If your child/young person continues to struggle and you are still concerned, then it may be helpful to talk to the SENCO as well. You may want to understand a bit more about the specific details of your child/young person's difficulties.

We have listed some possible things to ask about to help you to understand the nature and extent of your child/young person's difficulties.

Remember the 4 areas of difficulty:

- Cognition and learning:
 - Are they behind?
 - By how much?
 - Is the gap increasing or getting smaller?
- Communication and interaction:
 - Speech and understanding
 - How do they socialise, do they understand the social rules, have friends?
 - Do they understand emotions and feelings (theirs and other people's)
- Social, emotional and mental health:
 - anxiety,
 - behaviour (but also what causes the behaviour),
 - impulsivity
- Physical and sensory:
 - any physical disabilities,
 - hearing,
 - vision,

- sensory issues: do they struggle with certain textures, noises, smells (can be linked to struggling to pay attention)

What have school done so far?

Sometimes parents will be unaware of the support their child/young person is getting (and many children will tell their parents nobody helps them!) Don't compare what your child/young person is getting to other children – each child/young person is unique and will have different needs. Here are some suggestions of things your school might be doing that you can ask about.

- Any extra support from the teacher or class TA?
- Any 1:1 or small group work?
- Have they sought advice from other professionals?
- Are they helping your child/young person in any other way eg social skills groups, allowing them to leave the class for a break if they are struggling to maintain their attention or to keep calm (this will depend on your child/young person's needs)

Asking questions in meetings about our children/young people can be difficult, especially if we are nervous, angry or upset. Some meetings may be an emotional experience. Thinking about how to phrase questions ahead of time, can make a difference, keep the meeting positive and set the stage for a “working together” relationship.

Our leaflet **Non-Confrontational Questioning** has some suggestions about how to phrase questions.

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