

A parent's guide to:

**Getting the most
out of meetings
if your child has Special
Educational Needs**

Special Educational Needs
and Disability Information,
Advice & Support Service

sendiass
OXFORDSHIRE

**For more details about
SENDIASS Oxfordshire, phone:**

01865 810516

text:

07786 524294

sendiass@oxfordshire.gov.uk

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sendiass

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As a parent or carer of a child with Special Educational Needs (SEN), you will be invited to meetings about your child at school or sometimes with the SEN Officer from the local authority.

It is very important that you attend.

Remember, you know your child better than anyone.

Meetings go better when there are no surprises. There are things you can do to make sure you are better prepared and more confident.

First the practicalities:

If the date or time is not convenient for you, you can ask for it to be changed.

If you need help with access because of a disability or sensory impairment, remember to ask the school for help beforehand.

If English is not the language you use at home, and you find it difficult, please remember you can ask for an interpreter to help you. It may take a little time to arrange, so please ask for help beforehand.

Before the meeting

Get the paperwork together so you can go through it beforehand.

Have you been sent copies of everything you need? If not, you can ask for copies of SEN Support records, the Education Health and Care plan or Statement, reports about your child and the school's SEN policy. You can also ask to look through your child's school record and get a copy of this too, although you may have to pay the photocopying costs to the school.

Is there any paperwork you should fill in and send back before the day?

Try to do this in good time. If you need help with it, call SENDIASS Oxfordshire. Don't panic if you don't get it in on time, you can ring and check with school or the SEN Officer - it may still be worth sending it in.

Are you clear about what the meeting is for?

Is it a termly review, an annual review, a Team around the Child meeting?

Did you ask for the meeting or did someone else? It is helpful to check what the meeting is about. Ask how long the meeting is expected to last so you can be sure to make the points you want to rather than leave it till the end and find you have run out of time.

Find someone else to come with you

It can really help to have someone to give you moral support and prompt you if you forget to mention something. This could be a friend or relative, or you could ask SENDIASS for someone to accompany you to an education meeting. They can provide an Independent Parental Supporter for you for any sort of educational meeting. If the meeting is part of the process for requesting and drawing up an Education, Health and Care Plan, you can ask for an Independent Supporter to help.

Think about what you want to get out of the meeting

If you have an Independent Parental Supporter (IPS) or an Independent Supporter (IS) make sure you talk things through with them before the meeting so you can prioritise what you want to say.

If not, you can talk it through with family or friends. You can even practice what you are going to say if that helps.

Check how you are feeling about this meeting

If you are anxious, angry or upset, you can talk it through with someone, your volunteer IPS or SENDIASS. It is important that how you are feeling doesn't get in the way of getting what you want from the meeting. It is good to try and concentrate on what you want for your child in the future rather than focus on what has not been good in the past

Make a list of questions to ask and points you wish to raise – you don't want to forget anything

You may want to put these in a letter beforehand. Take a copy of your list and refer to it. Check everything has been covered.

What does your child think?

If possible, ask your child for their views including what they enjoy. Do they have any worries? Are there things they would like you to ask the teacher?

At the meeting

If you don't know everyone, ask them to explain who they are and what they do to support your child.

Jot down the name of everyone who is there. And you may want to ask how to contact them afterwards if you need to. It is a good chance to get the right address, phone number or email while you have them in the room with you.

Get your supporter to take notes, or ask if you can tape the meeting

It's easy for each person to come away from the same meeting with a different understanding of what has been said and agreed.

☑ **Don't be afraid to ask questions**

Sometimes professionals slip into jargon or assume you have more knowledge than you do. Keep asking until whatever is unclear has been explained in a way that makes sense.

If you don't agree with something that has been said or decided, say so clearly.

☑ **Ask for a break**

If you need to gather your thoughts, to have a quick word with your IPS, or need a glass of water, you can ask for a break.

☑ **Check what you think has been agreed before you leave**

Make sure you write down who is going to do what and by when.

Also check you have a date for next meeting to follow up any agreed actions and review your child's progress

After the meeting

- ☑ Talk over what happened afterwards with the person who came with you or someone else you trust. It will get it straight in your head and help you spot if you missed anything important. Don't be embarrassed to get back in touch to say there was something you forgot to raise at the time.

Sendiass Oxfordshire can offer:

- A telephone helpline: **01865 810516**
- Information, advice and support on matters to do with your child's SEN
- Help with communication between you and the Local Authority
- Trained volunteer Independent Parental Supporters and Independent Supporters
- Advice about preventing and resolving disagreements
- Training events for parents and groups – see SENDIASS website
- An informal Drop In SEN Advice session, 'Talking Points', – see website for dates

**Contact us on: 01865 810516 or
text 07786 524294**

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Confidentiality Code:

Everything you tell us will be treated in strict confidence. We will not disclose our records to, or discuss the case with, a third party outside SENDIASS Oxfordshire without your consent, except if we suspect a child is at risk.