

# REALIZE *more*

An online information, sharing and community resource for individuals with disabilities, parents, carers and professionals

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## Establishing good relationships with parents and carers

Here are a few suggestions on the foundations of building relationships with parents and carers of children in your class.

In establishing a good working relationship with parents/ carers we need to think carefully about:

### **The language and tone we use**

Are you using positive language in relation to the child's disability? Is your language open and welcoming towards the family? Is your language child-centred?

[Click here for some tips on use of language](#)

**Your body language** says more than you might think. 55% of what we communicate is through our body language, 38% through tone and only 7% the actual words we use. For example, sitting in a chair with your arms folded gives the impression that you are not relaxed, are guarded and not open to the meeting.

### **The setting**

Ensure your meetings take place in a space where the parents/ carers can sit, and you can both communicate confidently. Let parents know you respect and value their input by agreeing a specific time and venue for the meeting. Meeting just outside a classroom with the children rushing past, in a corridor will not offer either yourself or the parents/ carers the opportunity to discuss the matter in hand. The parents/ carers may also be left feeling rushed, undervalued and misinformed.

### **Tips on creating a positive environment for meetings:**

- Arrange a date, time and place to meet so the parent/carer knows you value meeting with them.
- Ensure your seat is not blocking the exit, so the parent/ carer does not feel trapped especially if you are discussing a difficult issue.
- Be welcoming- offer the parent/ carer a drink and make small talk when they arrive
- Take any resources or documents you plan to discuss with you and where possible make copies for the parents/ carers.
- Ensure the parent/ carer has already been informed of the purpose of the meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, outline the purpose and the agenda. Ask the parent/ carer if they wish to add anything to the agenda. Identify how long you expect the meeting to last.
- Make notes at the meeting and share the key points with the parents/ carers.
- Agree an action plan to go forward and if required arrange a date and time to meet next.

Prior to children starting on their first day, it is important to consider how to involve and communicate with families/ carers so you can get off to a good start.

Some ideas include:

- Hosting an open day for prospective children and families to attend where they can see the work children will be doing, ask questions, look around the classroom.
- An information pack for families with term dates, uniform requirements, special events/ trips, the curriculum for the child's year
- Home visit- Visiting the child and their family in their own home to talk about the year ahead. It will show families you are interested in their child, willing to make time and will give you the opportunity to observe the child in their own setting, understand what they like/ dislike, are able to and what they find difficult. This is an opportunity to complete the "About Me" tool.
- Informal one-to-one meetings with parents/carers - at parents/carers request.

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