

**GLYNE GAP SCHOOL**

**CURRICULUM GUIDELINES 19**

**WORKING WITH FAMILIES - A PARTNERSHIP FOR LEARNING**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### **A child's parents are the first, longest and most important educator!**

Much has been written about the need to work with parents. There are a range of reasons to work with parents that ranged from it being a consumer right to the usefulness of an unpaid helper in school. Some commentators have emphasised the needs of parents of disabled children. Relevant as these issues may be, our philosophy underpinning 'our' work with parents is based on a clear and simple belief:

**The most effective learning takes place when school and home work together.**

The school believes learning is the fundamental vehicle that will enable our pupils to become independent, autonomous and self determining people and this will determine their later quality of life. Effective learning is thus the central reason for our work with parents and notions of counselling, support and guidance are not within our professional mission. (There may be exceptions to this general rule - for instance the terminal nature of a child's condition).

This policy and guidelines are meant to state our guiding principles and act as a reference for agreed practice.

## 2. COMMUNICATION

Establishing and maintaining good communication between home and school will often determine the quality of our joint working arrangements. The class teacher is the key person as far as school is concerned.

- i. Home/School books In questionnaires to parents the home/school book is simply the most valued of home/school arrangements. All pupils in the school will have a book that passes between home and school daily. When pupils have moved to Further Education the home/school book will be discussed at review - it may be that older students and their parents agree that the book is no longer wanted/needed. Occasionally some parents will feel a written means of communication does not suit them - an alternative means will be used instead. Some pupils will benefit from using a Big Mack or Step by Step Communication aid to share news between home and school.
- ii. Newsletter We are committed to producing a newsletter which covers such things as news of events in school, activities experienced by classes, tips from the Home Learning Co-ordinator. We will endeavour to circulate the newsletter 6 times a year.
- iii. Open door policy Parents are welcome to come into school at any time. If there is a particular reason we suggest that parents make an appointment to ensure that the people who need to be seen are available. The Headteacher gives parents the highest priority in his working day and will nearly always respond to a request or enquiry the same working day. If he has no previous appointments he will see parents immediately. Occasionally parents over use the open door policy taking teachers' time away from other pupils. The Headteacher will be informed if this occurs and he will discuss the issue with those concerned.
- iv. Welcome Pack for new pupils The pack contains lots of information about life in school as well as some forms to complete to ensure that we know as much about the pupil as we can. (See Appendix 1 for contents)

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- v. Home Visits A number of staff, including the Home Learning Co-ordinator, make home visits periodically - this is often at a parent's request - to discuss something in detail in an informal atmosphere. The Headteacher offers a home visit to all new pupils some three months or so after admission. It may be that the school's Family and Personal Advisor accompanies the Head teacher on these home visits. The Nursery teacher makes a home visit to all new nursery pupils on admission. (See Appendix 1 Guidelines for Home Visits) (School Procedures 33).
- vi. School Information Sheets The school has prepared a number of information packs covering a range of topics like allowances, grants, review procedures, holiday suggestions, statementing etc. A list of what is available goes to parents annually so they can request what is useful to them. The Home Learning Co-ordinator is also the school's Parent Information Contact (PICs) and she will circulate information packs on request.

### 3. ARRANGEMENTS TO FACILITATE LEARNING

It is clear from our experience and our questionnaires that different parents want different levels of partnership. The school will always endeavour to accommodate all levels

The following outlines what the school will always do for every pupil:

- i. Termly goals Each term the class teacher will draft a set of goals for each pupil. These goals will, for most pupils, be actual skills that the child cannot do at the beginning of the term but will hopefully be able to do at the end. These goals will be sent home at the beginning of term for parental comment/suggestion etc. At the end of term the goals will be sent home again with the teacher's evaluation of how successful or otherwise the pupil has been. With the evaluated goals parents will be asked if they wish to suggest anything that might be included in the next terms goals. (See Curriculum Guidelines 1).
- ii. Monitoring and Recording Activities The class teacher may write to parents asking if they would like to be involved in planning or monitoring a particular skill at home. This could mean coming into school to watch the skill being practised and devising a home recording system. Such 'homework' is extended and changed as agreed.
- iii. Reading books Where a child is using a reading book, parents will be encouraged to hear their child read, the current reading book with a record will go home at an agreed frequency.
- iv. Specialist help and advice The school has certain trained and qualified staff to help with particular areas which require very specialist knowledge. At the moment there is a range of staff with specialist knowledge in: Communication, Sleep Disturbance, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Continence Management, Technical Computer advice and Healthy Lifestyle. All staff are trained to work practically with families at home and can be accessed through the Headteacher. Or through Annual review meetings. The specialist may work in conjunction with the Home Learning Co-ordinator (See Curriculum Guidelines 17 and 18).
- v. Review Meetings The formal review meeting is an annual meeting which statutorily reviews the pupil's Statement of Special Educational Need. At that meeting progress

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and achievement are discussed through the Annual review Report. All involved parties, including parents, and therapists are encouraged to submit a report. Transition plans for the future are also discussed and support will be offered by The Family and Personal Adviser (see section 12)

- vi. Transition arrangements When pupils move classes across the school it can be exciting as well as a time of great challenge because of the degree of changes involved. It is essential to keep pupils at the heart of the moving process. Each child's class team will produce a 'moving up' book which is written in the style of an extended social story designed to be shared with pupils and their families. The school will also facilitate a coffee morning in the term prior to the pupil moving to enable parents/carers to come into school and meet with each other and staff
- vii. Attitudes, behaviour, discipline For some pupils this is the key area of learning as it makes a significant difference to the quality of some one's life. Agreeing similar expectations and ensuring consistency in applying rewards and sanctions is of vital importance. This may be informally agreed or become the subject of a handling/management planning meeting. (See Curriculum Guidelines 17).
- viii. Child Protection At the heart of our philosophy is the belief that we are a school where everyone is treated with dignity, respect and is of equal worth. Learning and personal development takes place in a climate of trust and confidence and everyone has a responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. We have a curriculum which is proactive in its approach to keeping pupils and young people safe as well as a comprehensive policy (SP34) and regular child protection training for staff.

#### 4. INFORMATION ABOUT PROGRESS

- i. Formal Reporting Before each Annual Review the class teacher will write a comprehensive report covering all aspects of the pupil's work, progress and achievements. The report will also include a reference to the assessment instrument known as the P levels which have been achieved by the pupil in the curricular areas of Maths, English, Science, PSHE and ICT. The report will also include contributions from specialist teachers and Therapists At the reviews, pupil's Zigzag books or Progress files will be available for parents/carers to be used as a photographic reminder of the journey pupils have made with regard to progress and achievement
- ii. Termly Goals As previously indicated, at the end of each term goals being worked on during the term will be evaluated - this will then be sent home.
- iii. Open Evening for Parents this is usually held in the spring term 3 or 4, every other year. The open evening gives parents an opportunity to view and discuss their children's work profiles, work books, Zigzag books etc.
- iv. Certificates and National Accreditation Throughout their time at school pupils will have many opportunities to be awarded certificates. Some of these are linked to the school's checklists e.g. Soft Play. Additional special merit and challenge awards for named activities are also awarded. Pupils may be nominated for Worker of the Week Award for significant achievement. Parents will always be specially invited into assembly if their child is to be given this Award Opportunities for external accreditation include ASDAN (Transition Challenge, Towards Independence and Bronze levels) Duke of Edinburgh

- v. Bronze Award, ASA for swimming, BTA for trampolining and RDA for horse riding Progress File Students in the Further Education Faculty have a Progress File which is accumulated over their 3 year programme. There are contributions on a Termly basis from the Co-ordinator, student and the Family and Personal Advisor. The Co-ordinator will focus on the student's significant achievements, the student will reflect on their own view of achievement which may need to be completed with the support of an advocate. The Family and Personal Advisors report is based on an interview with the student, again supported by an advocate where appropriate, with the emphasis on what the student needs to work on, to gain independence and be prepared for Transition post 19.
- vi. Assessment At certain times formal assessment of pupils may take place. If this is by an external person e.g. Educational Psychologist, parents are always informed and invited to discuss findings. Parents are always fully involved in any decision making that may be the result of an assessment process. (See Curriculum Guidelines 7).
- vii. Daily Progress The daily exchange of information in the home/school book will give parents immediate information about success and achievement. **The school believes celebrating achievements is a fundamental foundation to successful learning.**

## 5. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

There is a 3 year strategic development plan for parents, families and other supporters which is devised in consultation with parents as part of the school development plan. The plan is divided into three areas which cover training, information and special events. It is based on information given by parents identifying their needs and linked to their child's learning. Parents and families are important in our learning partnership.

## 6. SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS

There are a number of organisations that meet with a common interest in some aspect of disability and who support the school. Below are the names of those organisations - contact for all can be made through school.

The Friends of Glynegap School (FOGGS) exist purely to further the aims of the school and the interests of its pupils. All parents are warmly encouraged to support this organisation. Other organisations include:

Dorset Road Respite Care  
 Downs Heart Group  
 Downs Syndrome Association  
 East Sussex Autism Support Group  
 Family Friends Scheme  
 Fragile X Society  
 Mencap and Mencap Homes Foundation  
 Sorrell Drive Children's Resource Centre  
 U.K. Rhet Syndrome Association  
 Unique (Rare Chromosome Disorder Support Group)  
 Care for the Carers  
 HarC - advice about Benefits and Allowances

## 7. COMPLAINTS/DISPUTES

- i. Complaints by Parents Parents are encouraged to air problems early; usually in the first instance to class teachers and then if there is no resolution to bring matters to the

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Headteacher. If there is still no resolution the curriculum sub committee of governors would consider a formal complaint on curriculum related issues, while a selected group of Governors not including the Chairman would hear a formal complaint on disciplinary matters. Parents can seek advice through the Case Work Officer in Pupil Services section of the Education Department, who is usually the 'Named Officer' in a pupil's statement.

Should parents be unhappy about their child's Statement of Special Educational Needs, then there is a well documented route of appeal through the LEA and ending, if necessary with the independent SEN tribunal.

The school will endeavour to deal with all informal complaints within five working days and usually within 24 hours, and with formal complaints to the Governing Body within 6 school weeks. The Governors formal complaints procedure is attached in Appendix 2

- ii. Complaints about/disputes with parents Occasionally staff may feel they have cause to complain about a parent. In the case of disputes, staff are advised to remain courteous at all times but not to accept verbal or physical abuse under any circumstances. The same sequence of actions applies as the preceding bullet point- problems to be aired early and if no resolution go through to the next stage i.e. class teacher, Headteacher, Governors and/or LEA Officers.

#### **8. PARENTAL RIGHTS TO WITHDRAW**

Parents may request that their child be withdrawn from collective acts of worship (see Curriculum Guidelines 18) and from any part of the Sex and Relationships Education programme - other than those elements required by the National Curriculum Programmes of Study (see Sex Education Policy). Parents will always be encouraged to discuss fully with the class teacher or Headteacher any such decisions.

#### **9. MULTI-CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In accord with the school's Equal Opportunities and Multi-Cultural policies, the school will provide translations and translators when needed. The school will endeavour to meet, and be receptive to, the cultural sensitivities in our work with families.

#### **10. PARENTS CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING**

Parents are invited to complete questionnaires and contribute in other ways to strategic school development planning.

#### **11. HOME SCHOOL AGREEMENT**

It is important to note that this is an agreement and not a contract. It is based on the principle of partnership and the essence of the agreement indicates from the schools point of view that we shall try to

- Always care for the pupil's safety, happiness, moral and spiritual development and general welfare
- Have high expectations and achieve high standards of work and behaviour, giving the pupil the knowledge, skills and confidence to enable them to become as independent as possible
- Develop strong and respectful relationships between everyone in the school

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From the parents point of view, the essence of what they are requested to try to do is

- Be an active partner with the school in their child's learning

The final part of the agreement is only for older pupils who can clearly understand the nature of the agreement with a significant amount of staff support.

## 12. EXTENDED AND SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

We believe that it is important to have a sense of belonging to a community and for parents and families to share fun with their child or young person. To facilitate this we have regular opportunities such as Grandparents Day, Mum's Day, Dad's Day and opportunities for siblings and the extended family to join in with whole school events such as the Church Carol Service, School Fete etc. These important occasions give an important opportunity to families to meet, socialise and get to know each other. Some of the social occasions also involve the families of our own staff to enable a real breath of relationships to develop.

## 13. PORTAGE PARTNERSHIP

The aim of the partnership is to provide a home visiting service, which offers support, help and advice to families with special needs children. Parents and carers will play a significant role in the child's development and together will work towards reaching the child's maximum potential. Portage is offered to parents when children are identified at the Nursery Liaison meeting or direct requests from parents who have heard about the Service. It is not an essential requirement that the children will be future Glyne Gap Nursery pupils.

This service works from the home with Home Visitors listening and appreciating the views of the Parents/carers on the child's future development. It is a service, which can be tailored to the needs of the child and aims to enhance their abilities and existing skills. Developmental Checklists covering the aspects of Physical/motor skills, Cognitive (thinking skills), Language skills, socialisation skills and self help skills are used to celebrate what the child can already do and identify areas on which to work together.

It is important to initially meet with the Parents/carers to discuss whether they believe a service such as Portage is right for the child, once this has been established a plan of action can be agreed. If it is agreed that this is the right type of service, weekly or fortnightly visits will be arranged with the Parents/carers.

The main principle of the portage partnership is to build on the abilities and strengths, rather than focusing on difficulties. We firmly believe that a child can make significant progress, when education and families work in partnership.

## 14. HOME LEARNING CO-ORDINATOR

The aim of this specialist member of staff is to support and encourage pupil's learning to be connected between home and school. This will enable the quality of a pupil's life, their happiness and independence to have the very best opportunity for success.

There are several references throughout this policy as to how the Home Learning Co-ordinators will work in her support for pupils and their families and carers.

In addition she will organise and support a Family day each term which will enable parents/carers, siblings and extended families an opportunity to socialise with each other whilst enjoying the facilities which the school has such as the swimming pool, soft play, trampolining, adventure playground etc

Access to support from this member of staff will usually be through the class teacher/Head teacher. Often Annual reviews will act as a catalyst for her support. As other times she will canvass opinion (for instance to inform training being offered to parents) through questionnaires and

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surveys

Links to other curriculum guidelines (CG) and procedures (SP)

SP 33 Admissions

SP34 Child Protection

CG1 Termly Goals

CG7 Assessment, Recording and Reporting

CG17 Supporting Positive Attitudes to Behaviour

CG18 Developing the Whole Child

GLYNE GAP SCHOOL WELCOME PACK

CONTENTS

- Welcome letter from Head teacher
- Order form for sweatshirts, poloshirts
- Home school agreement
- List of things your child needs to bring to school
- School questionnaire
- Frequently asked questions
- Letters about P.E / school meals (+application form)
- Request for medical information and consent forms for emergency treatment/administration of medicine
- Content forms for outings & permission to take photographs
- Details of Family Days
- List of useful phone numbers
- Copy of pupils timetable
- Information sheet to help your child to communicate at home
- Introduction to Home Learning Co-ordinator and referral form

**Working with families – a partnership for learning**

**Hard to Reach/Vulnerable Families**

**Background**

The school endeavours to identify pupils whose learning may be compromised, and to proactively work to mitigate those factors that compromise learning.

One such cause of “learning compromise” are families that find parenting a great challenge. Those families often have a range of vulnerabilities and often find it difficult to engage with school and with the learning process for their children.

The school tries as sensitively as possible to identify such families and uses the following criteria as possible indications:

**Identification**

- Poor literacy levels (family)
- Persistent hygiene issues
- Nature and/or frequency of contact with school is poor
- Poor understanding of basic needs e.g. diet, sleep, exercise
- Instability of housing
- Instability of relationships
- Poor/major health issues
- Other

(Free school meals is used as a national indicator of deprivation and may be an indicator)

There is a four stage process to identify such families. It begins with the class teacher, and includes the School Business Manager (who advises families on benefits and entitlements), the deputy head and the Headteacher. All four ‘stages’ must independently agree before the name is included in our Hard to Reach/Vulnerable Family list. (The final list has a restricted circulation).

**Action**

Once pupils/families have been identified the following actions are taken:

1. The pupils name is especially highlighted in the termly review of progress by the Headteacher. (General progress is graded every term; annual progress in core subjects is graded in the autumn term, personal development, behaviour, SMSC development and feeling safe, in the spring term; barriers to learning and full participation in the summer term).
2. In the school analysis of data, a special comparison of children from this “vulnerable group” will be made with the rest of the school. Individual case studies and further individual planning will be made for any pupils failing to make “good progress” or better.

3. A taxi is made available for annual reviews.
4. The family is offered a special session with the SBM on benefits and entitlements.
5. The home learning co-ordinator will meet the family and show the family a video of their son/daughter doing something independently.
6. School secretary will make a special relationship with escort/driver of the pupils school transport vehicle, (to help communication between home and school).
7. Transport will be made available to enable attendance at an after school club.
8. The Lifestyle Specialist will offer a meeting to the family.
9. The Headteacher will ensure regular medical and dental check ups.
10. There will be an annual (at least) "Family Learning Opportunity" where the key carers in the family, the child and a member of staff engage in a practical learning opportunity together, e.g. a sensory room experience, a shopping trip, a café experience.