

Implementing SEND Reforms: Person-centred reviews Christ Church Church of England Primary School, Oldham

Background

Christchurch CofE Primary school has been part of the Achievement for All programme for five years. Part of the initial pilot, the school has seen the programme develop and grow, and its approach now underpins everything the school does. Christchurch is a Quality Lead and an Ambassador school. There is a particular focus on providing support for children with SEN, making sure that interventions are 'fit for purpose' and developing parental engagement across the school. There are good relationships with parents but Christchurch is always looking for ways to improve this even further.

Context

Christchurch is a small rural village school with 71 pupils on roll in four classes – Reception, Y1/2; Y3/4; Y5/6. Numbers are growing with 15 in the current Reception class. Percentages of children qualifying as FSM, looked-after, and adopted are low but three children have statements, one is a high-need child, and three children are at SEN support level.

With the implementation of the new Code of Practice in September the school wanted to ensure that children and families were truly in the centre of the decision-making process, as stated in Chapter 6 of the Code:

"I felt special because everyone said really good things about me."

Pupil, Christchurch C of E Primary

6.54 The impact and quality of the support and interventions should be evaluated, along with the views of the pupil and their parents. This should feed back into the analysis of the pupil's needs. The class or subject teacher, working with the SENCO, should revise the support in light of the pupil's progress and development, deciding on any changes to the support and outcomes in consultation with the parent and pupil.

6.55 Parents should have clear information about the impact of the support and interventions provided, enabling them to be involved in planning next steps.

The school wanted to ensure review meetings meet these needs. The local authority is moving to this way of working and as an Achievement for All partner school, the process fitted in well with the Structured Conversation format, and the Early Support principles and tools, particularly 'Our Family'.

Approach

The next step for Christchurch in its Early Support work was the person-centred review. They were familiar with using 'Our Family' and the different headings were used during

“I really liked how my child was involved and how everything was on show so we could see it.”

Parent, Christchurch CofE Primary

Structured Conversations with parents and external partners. This format was put in place in Autumn Term 2014 with all children at SEN support and above and have proved to be successful.

This case study focuses on one of the children with high needs – a diagnosis of dyspraxia and autistic spectrum disorder. She recently joined the school and evidence is being collected to apply for an EHC Plan.

The review was well attended by mum, grandma, the educational psychologist, special needs advisory teacher, paediatric nurse consultant, SENCo, class teacher and teaching assistant.

The person-centred review focuses on what is important to and for the child, together with the other key people involved in their life. The process looks at what is working well and what isn't from the perspective of the different parties involved. The school takes a very visual approach with large sheets of paper attached to the walls on which participants write their thoughts. The headings used were:

- Ground rules
- Who's at the meeting
- What we like and admire about ...
- What is important to ...
- What's important for ...
- What's working well/what's not working well
- Action plan – action, who, when, outcome

The first session started with sharing the ground rules, introductions and an explanation of the process. The child was present for the first part of the meeting, she had some discussion prior to the meeting and had created pictures to explain what was important to her, she then shared this at the meeting.

As a group, participants then said all the things admired and liked about the child, this was written on a large piece of paper which the child was able to keep at the end of the session. This proved a positive experience for everyone and led into what's important for the child and what's working well in the same format. The group also discussed what was not working well and from this formulated an action plan, providing ownership for the actions and more importantly the outcomes. Everyone was in agreement with the actions.

All this information fed into the integrated assessment plan (IAP) and one page profile to provide a very clear picture of the child, her strengths and needs.

A second meeting took place six weeks later, the four plus one format was used which focused on five questions:

- What have we tried?
- What have we learned?
- What are we pleased about?
- What are we concerned about?
- What do we need to do next?

Again these were written on big sheets of paper which were completed as part of the discussion. The group felt the experience was positive and enabled a good balance of achievement and areas of concern. The process was very clear with everyone involved as equals and learning from each other.

The initial meeting was quite lengthy, and the school has found it useful to have a pre-meeting with parents if this is a new process or if the parents are not familiar with the staff. This ensures that everyone knows what to expect and is less daunted by the experience. The second meeting was more relaxed as everyone had been involved with the action plan and had responsibility for the outcomes.

Impact

There is a clear format to the meetings which are visual and inclusive. All parties are very much part of the process and are empowered to complete their actions, especially because they are written up for everyone to see. The meetings are outcome focused and well-balanced, providing an excellent overview of the child. It depends on the age and maturity of the child as to how long they stay in the meeting. Feedback has been positive from everyone. Although it was only a small change from the school's existing practice, it has had a massive impact in terms of ownership and accountability.

"It was the best review meeting I've been to, it was well resourced, well structured with clear outcomes."

Social Worker

Key Learnings

The school plans all review meetings by talking to the parents/carers first to get dates and times from them, and then speaks to the other key partners to get availability based on

the dates given. This ensures everyone is involved and can attend the meetings.

The school tries to keep meetings as informal as possible, everyone is more likely to participate if they feel comfortable and first names are used.

The meetings are successful because they follow a clear set of headings that can be discussed in detail and, because there is a scribe, the information is captured immediately under the appropriate headings.

Next Steps

Christchurch is going to continue to use this process and adapt it to meet the needs of the children and families.

"We have been lucky that all partners have attended the meetings – it will be more difficult if key partners are not present. It will be important to have their thoughts before the meeting so they can be fed into the meeting."

Sue Callaghan, Head teacher

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