

How to Build a Positive Relationship with Your Child's School

**One in a series of webinars commissioned by Resilient Rutland to support
parents/carers and families.**

A FRESH START

Even if you have had negative experiences with a previous school, start each new school or each new year as a fresh start and an opportunity for positive things to happen. People tend to live either up or down to our expectations so where possible look to start afresh and hope for the best.

How can you leave the past in the past?

LOOK FOR ALLIES

There is usually at least one member of staff that either you or your child gets on well with. These are your allies and the key to making the relationship with the school work. Work hard to build these relationships; many positive micro-interactions combine to make a big difference here. If they can't help you directly, these allies are often well placed to signpost you or to get your concerns escalated as needed.

Who are your child's allies in school?

DRAW ON STAFF'S EXPERTISE

School staff have years' of expertise and training that they can draw on. Tapping into this precious resource can both give you access to a wide range of ideas, strategies and resources you'd otherwise be missing and also sends a very strong message to the school that you value their opinion and trust them.

What would you like to know more about? Who could you ask at school?

SHARE YOUR EXPERTISE

When it comes to your child, you're the expert. Share what's worked well and less well with school. By helping them to help your child you can ensure that things get off to a good start for everyone. This isn't about telling the school how to do their job, but rather about saying, here are a few things that we've found worked for us; you might like to try them sometimes too...

What has worked well for you at home that school could learn from?

BE PATIENT, PERSISTENT, PROACTIVE AND POSITIVE

Step into the teacher's shoes and you can begin to understand why patience is needed here. As well as your child, the teacher will have 30 others to worry about and the head will have hundreds. For the same reason, you'll need to be persistent. With so many draws on their time, a kind but persistent and proactive voice is needed to advocate for a child in need. Check in often, but try to keep it positive; this will ensure that your relationship continues to build positively.

How can you strike the balance of being persistent without being irritating?

BE KIND!

It's important to always remember that teachers are people too... it can be easy to send emails in anger or to allow our distress to boil over in phone calls or in meetings; this doesn't tend to do anyone any good. Think about the behaviour you'd want to see from your child when interacting with their friends and teachers and look to emulate this. If you find that things are not progressing as they need to then communicate this clearly; but try to keep your cool. (Top Tip: if you write an angry email, sleep on it before you hit send).

Have you ever written and sent an email you later regretted?

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

Have a clear idea about what you're hoping for from any interactions with the school. It's going to be incredibly challenging for your goals to be met if the goalposts aren't clear. So have a clear idea what you're hoping for and ensure that you clearly and concretely state this aim. After meetings it can help to confirm in writing any actions that you think you've agreed; this ensures that everyone knows what is expected of them and when and gives everyone the chance to address any misunderstandings.

What do you want to happen? Who needs to know?

HUNT FOR THE GOOD

Find reasons to smile and be positive. In just the same way that as a parent we may grow to dread the school's number appearing on our phone, the reverse can also be true as we can fall into the trap of being quick to complain and slow to compliment. Challenge yourself and your child to hunt for the good in every day and to find good news stories to share with school.

Could you regularly check in with your child to hunt for the good?

WORK AS A TEAM

Sometimes the relationship between home and school can become a little adversarial. If this happens, we need to take a step back for a moment and remember that we're all on the same team; that of the child. Ideally we should be working as a team around the child driven by the child's needs and motivations rather than by adult agendas.

Who is in your child's team? Do you act as a team?

SAY THANK YOU

Never underestimate the power of the words thank you. Take time to appreciate school staff and to share your gratitude for anyone within the staff body who is making a difference to you or your child. Hand written notes will be treasured... can you be the reason that someone goes home with a smile on their face today?

Who could you make smile with a simple thank you card?

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