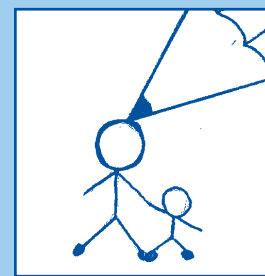


Parent Partnership News



... putting YOU in the picture

Monthly surgeries

We will be holding regular monthly surgeries at three venues in Bedfordshire.

The surgeries are by invitation only for parents of children who are undergoing Statutory Assessment. Each surgery will last 1–2 hours and will be fairly informal.

The aim of each surgery is to outline the process of Statutory Assessment, including timescales, and to meet an Assessment and Monitoring Officer who may be able to answer specific questions. The three venues are pictured below.



Removing Barriers to Achievement The Government's Strategy for SEN

The strategy sets out the Government's vision to enable children with special educational needs to realise their potential and a programme of sustained action and review to support early years' settings, schools and local authorities in improving provision for children with special educational needs in four key areas.

It builds on the proposals for integrating children's services in the Green Paper *Every Child Matters* and includes a strategy for improving childcare for families of children with SEN and disabilities.

New look – new staff

The Parent Partnership offices have a new look. Not only newly refurbished office space at Westfield Middle but additional staff to make the service more accessible. Joining Ann Baily are: Mandy Franklin who works on the admin side, and Adele Norman and Ruth Kerr who are Parent Partnership Officers.



Westfield Middle School,
Bedford



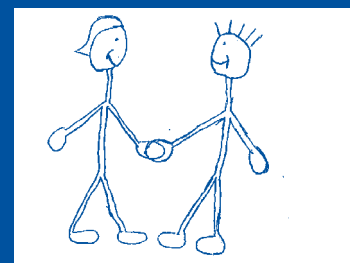
The Lawns Early Excellence
Centre, Biggleswade



The Salvation Army
Centre, Dunstable



Thanks to all who came to our coffee morning to support the Macmillan World's Biggest Coffee Morning. We raised £ 45.52.



A big thank you...

... to colleagues that Mandy, Adele and Ruth have visited. We appreciated the time and effort you put in to show us round, explain your work and how you fit into the "grand scheme of things" – it seems like a thousand-piece jigsaw sometimes!

The Parent Partnership Service
Westfield Middle School
Chester Road
BEDFORD
MK40 4HW

Tel: 01234 316353
Fax: 01234 316352
Email parent.partnership@bedscc.gov.uk



Bedfordshire
county council

A fictional phone call

We receive many phone calls from confused, sometimes angry and frustrated parents. This could be the start of a fictional phone call to give you an idea of the issues parents face.

My child is at risk of being excluded. She is increasingly being sent out of the classroom because she is disruptive and she is struggling to make any progress in her reading. She tells me each morning that she doesn't want to go to school and I think she gets into trouble at lunch times because she's just not happy. I find it difficult to meet the SENCO at school because she tells me she is very busy and I have pre-school children at home to look after too. I can't understand half the paperwork she sends home to me as it's written in jargon. So I am not really able to find out what the issues are. The SENCO has told me that other children in the school have greater needs and she needs to give priority to them. I've heard I can request a Statutory Assessment... How can you help?

What we're doing – Adele

Adele is developing a set of booklets for schools and parents covering the whole of the statementing process. The aim is to provide information in a format which is easy to understand. She is also looking at ways to reach parents who haven't previously been easily able to contact us.

Support Group Information

We often recommend local voluntary support groups to parents. Mandy is updating our information on local voluntary and community groups. If we don't have current information on your group please send it to us. In our next newsletter we hope to include a section about a local support group. If you'd like us to feature your group, please let us know.

Parents' comments

"I was able to talk through my feelings with someone who understood the system.

"Parent Partnership gave me support when nobody else wanted to listen, letting me know I was not at fault, encouraging me, making me believe I knew my son best and letting me know I wasn't alone."

"I appreciated someone to talk to, to give advice on my son that wasn't connected to the school."

"I found the whole experience with the school very emotional. As a parent going through all this it is very hard to know who to contact."

"I was glad to speak to someone who was prepared to listen to my concerns and who considered them valid."

"It helped me knowing that Parent Partnership are independent and have an unbiased view."

What we're doing – Ruth

Ruth is preparing to recruit volunteer Independent Parental Supporters. These volunteers will give support to parents of children with Special Educational Needs, for example helping them understand information and write letters, or going with them to meetings. Volunteers will receive four days' training. Dates of the first course in 2005 are:

- 10 Feb – Introduction
- 24 & 25 Feb – Main training
- 3 March – Office procedures and exit interview

There will be further courses for other areas.

To find out more, please phone 01234 316353.



Our meeting room in Bedford is a quiet, private room where we hold monthly surgeries and can offer appointments to talk with parents.

Children's Information Service

The Children's Information Service provides free information, advice and support to parents and carers about all registered childcare provisions and services for children and young people in Bedfordshire.

The Children's Information Service also holds information and contact details of local support groups and activities for children with additional needs.

For more information, please phone 01234 228229.

The Parent Partnership Service aims to help parents and carers whose children have special educational needs. The Service provides information, advice, support and guidance to enable parents and carers to make informed decisions about their child's education.

If you would like help from Parent Partnership, please phone us on 01234 316353