

Reading Families' Forum

A voice for families of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities

COFFEE EVENING 27th June 2024

At RISC

Six parent carers attended a discussion with Joyshree Saikia, the Community Engagement and Research Advisor and Turgut Karlidag, a SEND Specialist from RISE. RISE is the new Reading Inclusion Support in Education team.

RISE supports schools and colleges to help them include young people with additional needs.

Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) is the support that mainstream schools or settings should be able to provide for a child or young person through their agreed funding and resource arrangements. Turgut brought a version of the OAP for parent carers for comments.

Parent carers said:

Section 4.4 – it would be better to say: “Before requesting an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment, the school should normally already have made efforts to support children and young people with SEND through high quality teaching and SEND support over a reasonable period.” The law doesn’t require a period of SEND support before requesting a needs assessment. Some children need an Education, Health and Care Plan to access nursery and/or reception at school.

Parent carers said that their experience of accessing support was very different from what was in the OAP guide.

Parent carers want to be able to see the same document as schools so that they can hold schools to account where necessary. Some parents don’t need an easy read document.

It was agreed that a shorter version with images would be helpful so that parent carers can understand the principles if they are very busy or don’t read English well.

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Please make it clearer that this is just what mainstream education settings should provide, not what is needed in a crisis or what children need if they can't access mainstream school and there is no special school place.

All service providers should treat parent carers like human beings needs. Listen and be honest.

It was agreed that the RISE team and the Reading Families' Forum would coproduce the main OAP for schools and parent carers plus a shorter more visual summary.

Transitions

Joyshree asked what parent carers consider is needed in transitions from nursery to school, year 6 – year 7 and year 11 onwards.

It would be better if schools focussed less on the SATS in year 6 and more on preparation for secondary school.

Another important transition is from mainstream to special school. Some parents are upset if their children don't get into a grammar school – it can be extremely hard coming to terms with your child not being able to go to a mainstream school. Offer support to parents at this transition.

Offer more support to parents whose children aren't in mainstream schools and there is no special school place. It is a really difficult time and children need education.

Remember that some secondary children are the children who did the transition to year 7 in lockdown and may need extra support at the next transition.

It is really helpful in some primary schools when the year teacher steps down to be a teaching assistant to the same class in the next school year. It ensures that children with additional needs are supported by someone who knows their needs well.

With all year to year transitions, it is helpful for young people with additional needs to know what will be happening on the first day back in September. It reduces anxiety considerably.

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Parents advised caution about providing link students. Sometimes they don't support younger children as they should but the school aren't aware that support is being provided.

Joyshree will feed the above back to the RISE team.

RB 28/07/24