

Guidance for all staff on structured conversations

Planning

Before having any conversations or discussions with parents it is important to plan first to ensure your safety and security and to be prepared for the parental response.

In the planning stage consider the following:

* Where are you going to meet (is it a safe, neutral place with easy access to enter and exit)
* When are you going to meet (convenient to both parties and at a time that is going to get the best out of you both e.g. not after a very long or difficult day at work!)
* How are you going to communicate (email, letter, verbally but ensure you both know how you are able to contact one another)
* What are you going to say (bullet point the main issues and consider the responses you may get from parents so you are prepared)
* How are you going to manage the situation if parents become angry, anxious or upset (what is the back-up plan e.g. another member of staff supports)

The Structured Conversation

More information is available from the below link;

* National Strategy from 2009 in ‘Achievement for All’
* Available via web link
* [The Structured Conversation - Handbook to support training (ioe.ac.uk)](https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/2418/1/afa_struct_conv_hbook_0105609bkt_en.pdf)

Used particularly for SEND but can be applied to any type of engagement with parents

Four Main Elements of the Structured Conversation:

* **Explore**-attending (using the right body language) and paraphrasing (rephrasing what the parent says so that they are listened to and understood)
* **Focussing**-summarising the topics of discussion and use of effective questions e.g. the miracle question. E.g. if I could wave a magic wand what would that mean for your child in school?
* **Planning**-Setting goals (what do we want to achieve) and giving information (sharing of information to achieve goals)
* **Reviewing**-Summarising and Recording what happened.

Then **Reflect** on how effective it was.

Key points

* Have a safety plan / risk assess the situation (don’t be alone)
* Use clear and non jargonistic language
* Ensure opportunities to highlight the positives
* Have a clear agenda
* Make actions for both parties
* Be prepared for questions
* Summarise and agree a time to meet again

Conclusion

Ensure that both you and the parents leave with a clear understanding of what has been shared (the issues) what both parties views are of the situation and what both parties tasks are. It is often useful to have a written agenda so parents can make any notes on their tasks to complete. It is so important that you agree a time and a date to review, either another formal meeting or verbal feedback. This is so that parents get a chance to reflect and reconsider and ultimately have a deadline/goal in which the change can be achieved either by the child, themselves or the response from the school or all three. It is also necessary that parents have a means of contacting you to discuss the issues at any point in the meantime before the review.