



To: Parents/Carers, Key staff at Stocksbridge High School
From: Kathleen Farrand-Green, Project Worker, Autism in Schools.
Date: 10/10/2023
Title: Feedback from Parent Meeting.

Date of Meeting 10/10/2023

Number of attendees 12 Parents/Carers attended.
Kay Theobald Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)
Kathleen Farrand-Green (Autism in Schools project)

Discussion Points

This was the sixth Autism in Schools (AIS) meeting held with parents/carers at Stocksbridge High School. The purpose of these meetings is to share information and gather parent/carer feedback about Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision in the school, which will then be used by the school to help improve the experience of SEND children. Information gathered will also be used at a local and national level to inform SEND policy. All information recorded will be done so anonymously. Other schools in Sheffield are taking part in the project, all are secondaries. All parents at the school who have a child with SEND, diagnosed or not, were invited to attend.

Introductions were made and the group expectations and aims were shared.

Introduction to SEND at Stocksbridge High School

Contact school about SEND needs via email- ktheobald@stocksbridge-mlt.co.uk
Initial Contact at school is Form teacher via email-@stocksbridge-mlt.co.uk
General questions- enquiries@stocksbridge-mlt.co.uk

KayTheobald (SENDCo) took the opportunity to introduce herself to the group, explaining that the school have chosen to join the Autism in Schools project because they want to support additional needs children and their families, and this includes hearing parents and carers perspectives.

SIMs App- this has been introduced this term. Information about timetables, behaviour points, achievement points are on it. Homework will be added after half term for KS3 only, not KS4- homework will remain on Teams for KS4.

Homework- currently KS3 only getting maths home work- this will change to all subjects after half term on a rotation basis..

SPARX is a website used for maths homework and SENNACA is used for some other homework- these are interactive and more engaging than more traditional homework. KS4 also have Educake For Science. School trailing other online homework methods.

MINT is a seating planner where basic SEND details about a child's needs can be documented for staff to see. If there is an issue with seating arrangements or information about needs should be added, please contact Kay. MINT is updated, if needed, after every SEND meeting or via Teacher information sharing.

Homework club- there is TA supported homework club available in Paragon Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday There are also more independent homework clubs elsewhere in school. They run until 4pm, and there is a second school bus that runs at 4pm- if there is an issue with second bus, school will use the minibus to get children home. The Paragon homework club is needs based by invitation. If parents think their child would benefit but does not currently have an invite - email Kay to discuss. Some children really struggle to do homework at home, whereas others need to get home as soon as possible, hence it is based on individual needs- and this includes parents communicating any needs that become apparent at home, especially with children who mask at school.

Breakfast club- daily at 8am, by invitation. Again, if a child needs this please email Kay.

Passes- can be provided for children based on needs and include leaving class early pass, clothing adaptation, time out passes- please discuss with Kay if needed.

Paragon is the school's regulation zone.

There are 3.5 Teaching assistants (at full time equivalent). There is a lot of demand on their time and school try to share their time as wisely as possibly.

Alternative Learning Pathway is available for those children who struggle with basic literacy (needs based, normally for children reading at primary level). Reading support is given in place of history and geography, with the aim of returning to regular pathway when they are ready.

GCSEs are offered as well as BTECs. Choices are made based on needs, and the full suite of GCSEs can be adapted based on needs.

Bridge provision- is for children who are struggling to attend school. There is a focus on life skills and basics, with an aim of helping children return to regular lessons.

There has been a technical issue that has meant some staff emails are sent to junk. If you have emailed Kay, or any staff member and not had a response in 48h- phone the office to follow up.

What is going well?

A number of parents gave positive feedback about how well their child has coped with the start of term, which meant a transition to secondary school for many of them. They felt their child has been well supported. Quite a few parents were pleasantly surprised that their child is coping better at secondary than they did at primary- they talked about moving from class to class acting like a sensory break and their child feeling more challenged and stimulated. Parents shared how passes have helped their children- this includes time out passes, pass to leave class early and fiddle toy passes.

One parent spoke about using information SIMs app to help prepare their child for the next school day.

Points raised

A number of parent/carers have children who are awaiting assessment for autism, ADHD or both. This is a cause of frustration and parents reported that in previous settings a lack of diagnosis has been an obstacle to support. It can also be an obstacle to accessing specialist settings if needed. Reassurance was given by Kay that support should be needs based, not diagnosis based. If a child needs more help, email her. We spoke about how useful it can be to seek help and information to inform parenting in a neurodiverse way, even when your young person is not yet diagnosed. I will share resources developed by NHS Sheffield to support children and their families while they wait for diagnosis.

Sensory needs can be an obstacle to wearing uniform. Parents shared ideas including repeated washing to soften fabrics and practicing wearing uniform before school starts. Some parents were surprised to find their child did cope with uniform better than expected. If a child really can not wear uniform- discuss this with Kay. When needed sensory adjustments to uniform can be made as a reasonable adjustment, this is considered on individual basis.

The group shared concerns about supporting children who mask in school, it can be harder for others to see their needs and harder to get help. Reassurance was given that this is recognised in school, please communicate with the SENDCo if this is happening- because school do not see it, they can only support if they are told.

Skin Picking- a parent mentioned concerns about this as an ongoing issue, causing soreness on hands. Suggested seeing GP if it is causing damage. Parent asked if gloves could be used in school- we talked about how this would be a reasonable adjustment if needed, suggest discussing with SEND team. Also consider if child will be willing to wear them, parents mentioned how children tend to get more self conscious at secondary. Further information will be shared. KT- Support can be given in terms of Fidget passes or other strategies to support. Gloves can be worn – KT will inform staff and issue Uniform pass to support if needed.

Tics- child given behaviour points for fake cough which is actually a tic. We talked about tics and how to identify them. Anyone in this situation encouraged to contact Kay, tics can be added to MINT plan. A parent said that sharing information on MINT has been helpful for their child, though it can take a few days for all staff to see it. I will share some information from Tourette's Action on supporting children with tics-not all children who have tics have Tourette's, they can also be part of autism. But this information could be useful for both. We spoke about how tics can be situational, periodic, made worse by excitement and stress. All staff are informed of Tics and the form they take- please advise on issues relating to this so she can inform staff and share specific information to avoid issues.

Other points for discussion

Parents spoke about concerns about the vulnerability of their children. They might be unaware of social nuances, struggle with the complexity of friendships at secondary or be too eager to please. Parents worry about bullying and peer acceptance.

Also, how tricky it can be when children cannot express the cause of their concern, or fully understand dynamics of a situation- trying to work out what has happened.

A parent/carer raised concerns about a primary aged child, professionals concerned have stated they need a special school for secondary. Suggestions made included looking at all the

options, gathering evidence to support need and seeking support of Sendco at current school and SENDIAS. Some Reassurance was given that if all professionals agreed, this should ease the process. I will share some information (Sheffield Parent Carer Forum, SENDIAS, IPSEA, Special Needs Jungle, Bright Futures) that can inform the process.

We spoke about ADHD and how not all ADHD children are hyper active. Also parents shared the impact of the rejection sensitivity aspect of ADHD which can have a big impact on friendships and self esteem. Parents shared about how helpful ADHD courses from Family Action and also the ADHD café can be. I will share information about both.

Parents spoke about the stresses of trying to support their child, and how they often feel judged. Many parents explained how they have to stand back when their child melts down, but are then judged as 'letting them get away with it'. The child may be very upset and remorseful later, and need comfort, when others may expect comfort to be withheld as punishment. They may respond better to advice when they are calm later, rather than in the heat of the moment. Parents were aware their children are trying to cope with a world not suited to them. No child would choose more challenging behaviours. Parents shared similar experiences and emotions, they had worked hard to understand their child and parent responsively, to support their mental health and development. But this is not always easy and impact on parents needs to be acknowledged.

Sources of help with mental health suggested by parents – Door 43 (in school Mondays- only for over13yo), Goldigger (in town) and Kooth (online). I will share details for parents who want to explore these.

Moving Forward

The Autism in Schools Project will continue in Stocksbridge High School, with input from a project worker until approximately March 2024. After this, parents are keen to continue these meetings, and school are proactive about supporting this. The planned format is using a room in school, with school promoting the meeting, the SENDCo will be available at the start to share information, then parents get time to talk, share ideas and support each other. Jo Stavert-Dobson and June Pollard have kindly agreed to support this, sharing their knowledge and experience as parent champions.

A schedule of meetings for the Autumn Term has been agreed. Meetings will be held on 7th November and 5th December at 9am.

Suggested topics for future meetings were; Behaviour policy and how it affects SEND children

If anyone has any suggestions for themes for meetings, or wishes to raise any issues, please email Kathleen.green@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk.

Themes

Communication
Support for parents
Transition
Transition
Perception of peers
Reasonable adjustments
Masking
TICs
Waiting for assessment

Parent Carer Forum and other sources of support

Parents who can not attend in person can contact Kathleen Farrand-Green Kathleen.green@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org to make their contribution.

Parents aware of Parents Carer Forum and Peer support service. This is free to all parent carers with a child or young person under 25 who lives in Sheffield. This includes Peer support and parent workshops in Stocksbridge up to date details are on our website. www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk for more information.

Details for sources of support and information mentioned at today's meeting are listed at the end of this document.

<u>Actions</u>	<u>To be completed by whom</u>	<u>Date to be completed</u>
Discuss issues raised at meeting.	KT, KAJG	Before next meeting
Circulate report and useful sources of information.	KAJG	Before next meeting

SEND in Sheffield-Useful contacts

This is not an endorsement of any of these services by SCPF. They are resources that might be useful, and they are all free to use. If you have found a resource useful, let me know and I will add it to next months report.

Special needs- general

Sheffield Parent Carer Forum website- you can join below for free, and also access our peer support service, who can advise you about issues relating to your SEND child or young person (up to age 25). There is also information on the website about the Sheffield Support grid and Extended Support Plans. We also offer events and activities for SEND families. There is information about applying for DLA and carers allowance, and activities for SEND young people in Sheffield

www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

The Family Works Sheffield- this has been recommended by parent/carers who have had positive experiences. It offers support to families who are dealing with complex issues.

<https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=9d41ad2b6dd57256JmltdHM9MTY4Mjk4NTYwMCZpZ3VpZD0xYWVhMzk1Mi03ODIKLTY3N2YtMzQ2Zi0yYjFkN2M5ZDYxZDcmaW5zaWQ9NTE3Ng&ptn=3&hsh=3&fclid=1aea3952-789d-677f-346f-2b1d7c9d61d7&psq=Family+Works+St+Johns+Hillsborough&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly9zdGpiLmNodXJjaHN1aXRILmNvbS9ldmVudHMvd3dkaWI1dDc&ntb=1>

Education and EHCPs

Sheffield SENDIAS offer free advice and support to families of SEND children, around social care and education, including issues like EHCPs and My Plans.

www.sheffieldsendias.org.uk

IPSEA offer advice on SEN education, including EHCPs

www.ipsea.org.uk (IPSEA) Independent Provider of Special Education Advice

Special Needs Jungle- Parent led information on SEND education including EHCPs

www.specialneedsjungle.org.uk Special Needs Jungle - News, info, resources & informed opinion about Special Educational Needs, disability, children's physical and mental health, rare disease. Campaigning to #FixSEND

Sensory Issues

Sheffield Children's Hospital have some practical resources for supporting your child with sensory issues. These are the resources you will be asked to work through if your child is referred to Ryegate for sensory needs.

www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/services/child-development-and-neurodisability/sensory-processing-difficulties

Autism

Below is a link to the Sheffield Children's Hospitals information on autism. I would suggest having an explore if you are new to autism or awaiting assessment. There are things like a social story for understanding what will happen at assessment. I think the 'myth busting' section is quite useful too. And the advice on how to help and support your child is also helpful.

www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/services/child-development-and-neurodisability/autism-home

Autism Carers and Children Together (ACCT) is Sheffield based. It offers activities for autistic children and teenagers, family activities, training and peer support.

www.acctsheffield.org.uk

Autism Hope operates in North Sheffield and has been recommended by parents/carers

www.autismhopesheffield.co.uk

Mental Health

Goldiggas isn't SEND specific, it runs courses to support self esteem and social skills, as well as weekly craft sessions. A lot of SEND children do attend and give good feedback.

www.golddiggertrust.co.uk/wellbeing-workshop

Door 43 are at Stocksbridge High on Mondays, they also offer a drop in for mental Health support in Sheffield centre for 13yrs+

[Wellbeing Cafe at Door 43 | Sheffield Mental Health Guide](#)

Kooth offers online mental health support for 11 yrs+

[Kooth | Sheffield Mental Health Guide](#)

Tics and Tourettes

Some resources at Tourette's action might be useful, even if a child does not have Tourette's, a child who is autistic might also tic sometimes.

[Resource library \(tourettes-action.org.uk\)](http://resource.library(tourettes-action.org.uk))

Skin Picking

The information below comes from OCD UK. If a child is skin picking it does not necessarily mean they have OCD, it is listed as a related condition, often seen in autism/adhd and sometimes made worse by anxiety.

[Excoriation Disorder \(skin picking disorder\) | OCD-UK \(ocduk.org\)](#)

ADHD

The Sheffield Children's Hospital advice on ADHD.

www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/services/child-development-and-neurodisability/adhd

Family Action offer support for families parenting ADHD children in Sheffield

www.family-action.org.uk/what-we-do/children-families/send/sheffield-adhd/#in-your-area