

## **Working with professionals to create plans and targets – A classroom teacher's perspective**

I have worked in different counties and different schools with a wide range of multi-professionals. Being in a partnership of mutual support and respect with other professionals is something that is key to the way we work together to raise standards and achieve goals in all areas of work with the pupils.

Multi-professional programmes need to be viewed by teachers as an integral part of planning for academic targets and personal care in an SLD setting, particularly for pupils whose needs are more profound and/or complex.

Ownership – As a class teacher you will need to take the ownership and responsibility for achieving the maximum support from other professionals. Remember when working with other professionals that they have large caseloads often in a wide variety of settings. As class teacher you are the person dealing with the whole child and it will be for you to pull together all the threads of what may seem to be a wide spectrum of multi-professional input and make it work for the pupil. This must also include the parental perspective which you will need to negotiate through regular parent meetings and informal daily contact.

Communication – This is the pivotal part of achieving positive partnership. I have found that successful relationships are achieved by honest, clear, respectful and regular communication.

As a class teacher always be the one to offer ideas for targets and plans. You should suggest long term and short term educational targets and personal plans, setting them in your educational context. I have found that if I drive the initiatives other professionals are extremely supportive.

With electronic communication many professionals are happy to read draft Individual Education Plans and personal care plans. They may be able to help you to achieve these targets by:

- Suggesting changes
- Breaking down targets into achievable parts
- Offering ideas
- Offering resources and activities.

This communication and joint ownership approach ensures that both your and their focus is the same (e.g. Speech therapist and class team focus on the same communication target each term as part of the Individual Education Plan).

Classroom - Invite them in; have an open door policy as much as possible. Be brave enough to let them observe you and then feed back about, or even criticise, your teaching methods. This can be really helpful. For example, a Speech therapist was able to point out during an observation of my communication/English session the next small steps to help pupils when using switches. She modelled this, and I was then able to use her ideas daily, thus ensure pupils achieved their communication/English targets.

Dedicated Time – Ensure you make time to speak to all professionals. Be organized, making appointments on class team calendar of high priority and well in advance. Be prepared for their visit, and write down any issues you have clearly (as their visit may be short or your discussion time cut short by other priorities).

As class teacher you will need to plan dedicated time within your timetable, organising key personnel and staff to carry out programmes. It is also helpful for these key personnel, often teaching assistants, to have time with the professional themselves for training and support. You will need to organise your class to make sure this happens.

Resolving Issues – If you are concerned about a programme, do communicate your concerns early. Perhaps invite the professional into class to show the difficulties of delivering in your school context. Do they have a solution? Is there a compromise you could reach? Is a staggered approach needed? Does the class team need more training?

*This is an example from my early years of teaching*

In a busy class things, weren't working well for a hearing impaired pupil. Communication between myself and another professional was poor and the pupil was not making progress. I was finding the programme from the Hearing Impaired team impossible to execute.

I invited the team in for three sessions and asked them to be constructively critical. They were, and offered a range of initial very simple solutions. They also went away to resolve some more complex issues including environmental ones. Together, over a period of four months, we made the environment more conducive to learning for this pupil and she made good progress.

We all felt that the experience was of value in giving new insight. The HI team had often felt the school was being difficult or lazy in executing their plans. These sessions gave both me as teacher and them a different perception and understanding of the challenges both our roles held. This relationship was extremely helpful in the future. Their support was invaluable; positive relationships were formed, and barriers broken down.