**Working with Parents**

**Secondary NQT CPD Package**

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**Resource Pack**

*To be completed alongside viewing the accompanying video.*

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**Activity 1** **- Scenario 1**

Below is a transcript of a face to face/verbal conversation at a parent meeting. The student (Rosie Smith) is in Year 9 and is speaking to her History Teacher with her Mother (Ms. Nicholls), Rosie is a pupil from a very disadvantaged background.

**Your task**: 1) Identify (highlight/underline) 5/6 key areas for improvement and annotate the transcript or suggest improvements in the response box. 2) Re-watch slide 3 of the video for further ideas. Add your reflections to the reflection box at the end of the scenario – what has been learned, what actions or further CPD do you need to take. 3) Use the exemplar answer at the back of the resources pack to self-assess your edits.

**Teacher – Hello Rosie, Hi Mrs Smith thank you for meeting with me.**

**Rosie – Hi Miss**

**Teacher – So, in terms of Rosie’s achievement in history lessons it is clear that she doesn’t enjoy this subject as she is always chatting in lessons, doesn’t complete the tasks set in class and has a poor homework effort.**

**Rosie – But it’s not always me Miss, Becky is always talking too and you never tell her off.**

**Teacher – Well we’re not talking about Becky we are talking about you.**

**Mother – Perhaps Rosie just doesn’t like history and she doesn’t have to do it in Year 10 anyway, so what’s the point in her trying?**

**Teacher – Yes, well she has to do it now and until the end of Year 9 so I expect her to behave in a more co-operative manner.**

**Rosie – But the lesson is just so boring Miss.**

**Teacher – Perhaps if you engaged more then you wouldn’t find it so boring.**

**Mother – Surely you agree that it is hard to engage if you find it boring can’t you make the lessons more interesting?**

**Teacher – The other pupils don’t find it boring so I feel it is imperative that Rosie commits herself to her learning.**

**Mother – Ok. Bye.**

Responses:

Reflections:

*Aims:*

**Activity 2 - Scenario 2**

Below is a piece of written communication to a parent/carer on the subject of a pupil’s poor behaviour/academic achievement in maths. The pupil is Bilal (Year 10) and he is from a single parent family – he lives with his dad Mr Hussain.

**Your task**: 1) Identify (highlight/underline) 5/6 key ways that this could be improvement to encourage more positive parental engagement. Annotate the letter/email to show your ideas/thoughts or add these to the response box. 2) Re-watch slide 6 of the video for further ideas. Add your reflections to the reflection box at the end of the scenario – what has been learned, what actions or further CPD do you need to take. 3) Use the exemplar answer at the back of the resources pack to self-assess your edits.

**Dear Mrs Hussain,**

**I am writing to inform you that Bilal is not achieving his target grade in maths. In his most recent assessment, he achieved a grade D, which is really disappointing and just shows her lack of commitment to learning in lessons and also poor homework effort.**

**Dilal must work harder and do all his homework. He will be in subject support sessions every Tuesday lunchtime until his grade improves. At home he should use MyMaths to revise lots and should be aiming to do at least an hour of revision every night on this website.**

**It is vital that you make Bilal do this homework and attend the subject support sessions to avoid him falling further behind and failing his maths GCSE.**

**Yours sincerely,**

**Mr Maths**

Responses:

Reflections:

**Activity 3 - Scenario 3**

Below is a written communication to a parent/carer on the topic or home-learning and expectations. The email is sent to a parent (Mrs Brown) of a Year 7 pupil (Poppy Brown) who is more able, highly conscientious but anxious about school and not completing homework set.

**Your task**: 1) identify (highlight/underline) 5/6 key areas for improvement and annotate the communication to suggest improvements or add these to the response box. 2) Re-watch slide 8 of the video for further ideas. Add your reflections to the reflection box at the end of the scenario – what has been learned, what actions or further CPD do you need to take. 3) Use the exemplar answer at the back of the resources pack to self-assess your edits.

**Dear Parent,**

**I am writing to let you know that all Year 7 students should be completing between 2 and 3 hours of homework every night in order to achieve their academic expectations. Pupils in set 1 will be expected to do more than this.**

**If students do not do their homework to the best of their ability, they will be put into head of Year detention on a Monday night between 3.30 and 4.30pm.**

**Please ensue that you help your son/daughter to complete all of their homework tasks on time and to a high standard.**

**Yours faithfully,**

**Bob Seven**

**(Head of Year 7)**

Responses:

Reflections:

**Activity 4 – Scenario 4**

Below is a transcript of a telephone conversation with a parent who has called as they are unhappy with the most recent data that has been sent home concerning their child’s progress. They claim that there are errors with regards to attendance data and achievement/negative behaviour points. This is a hard to reach parent who hasn’t engaged with home-school communications/meetings.

**Your task**: 1) identify (highlight/underline) 5/6 key areas for improvement and annotate the communication to suggest improvements or add these to the response box. 2) Re-watch slide 7 of the video for further ideas. Add your reflections to the reflection box at the end of the scenario – what has been learned, what actions or further CPD do you need to take. 3) Use the exemplar answer at the back of the resources pack to self-assess your edits.

**Parent – I got my son Michael’s report in the post this morning and I’m not happy!**

**Teacher – What are you unhappy about?**

**Parent – Well it’s all wrong, you’re telling lies about my son.**

**Teacher – I’m sure that is not the case.**

**Parent – Well I’m telling you that it is wrong, and I want it changing.**

**Teacher – I’ve just checked the document and I can’t see any errors.**

**Parent – My son does not have 76% attendance and he has not had 27 negative behaviour points; he would have told me about that. Also, his maths teacher says he has not done all of his homework this term and Michael says he has.**

**Teacher – Have you considered that Michael might not be telling you the truth?**

**Parent – Are you calling my son a liar?**

**Teacher – No I’m just saying that he may not be as angelic at school as you believe him to be, in fact he’s really disruptive and difficult in a lot of lessons and perhaps you should be more concerned about that than an error in his attendance percentage.**

**Parent – I’m not discussing this with you anymore, I demand to speak to the Head.**

Reflections:

Responses:

**Scenario 1 – Suggested Improvements**

Below is a transcript of a face to face/verbal conversation at a parent meeting. The student (Rosie Smith) is in Year 9 and is speaking to her History Teacher with her Mother (Ms. Nicholls), Rosie is a pupil from a very disadvantaged background. Please consider the suggestions for key errors and how to avoid these and then reflect on your thoughts in relation to these suggested improvements.

Rosie’s mum is called Ms. Nicholls, the teacher could already have annoyed/upset her by making this error

Teacher – Hello Rosie, Hi Mrs Smith thank you for meeting with me.

Rosie – Hi Miss

Teacher – So, in terms of Rosie’s achievement in history lessons it is clear that she doesn’t enjoy this subject as she is always chatting in lessons, doesn’t complete the tasks set in class and has a poor homework effort.

This is a very negative way of starting the conversation. It is always more effective to start with a positive and then move on to areas of improvement. Parents/carers will be more on side if you do this

Rosie – But it’s not always me Miss, Becky is always talking too, and you never tell her off.

Teacher – Well we’re not talking about Becky we are talking about you.

Mother – Perhaps Rosie just doesn’t like history and she doesn’t have to do it in Year 10 anyway, so what’s the point in her trying?

Teacher has lost parental support now and the conversation is very negative. The teacher doesn’t use any evidence to back up the points that she is making so it is all very subjective

Teacher – Yes, well she has to do it now and until the end of Year 9 so I expect her to behave in a more co-operative manner.

Accusatory tone that will put pupil’s and parents on the defensive

Rosie – But the lesson is just so boring Miss.

Teacher – Perhaps if you engaged more then you wouldn’t find it so boring.

Mother – Surely you agree that it is hard to engage if you find it boring can’t you make the lessons more interesting?

The dialogue is now full of emotion and the parent is feeling that she has to defend her daughter and has been quite personal towards the teacher, this could have been avoided if the start of the dialogues was handled better

Teacher – The other pupils don’t find it boring, so I feel it is imperative that Rosie commits herself to her learning.

The teacher’s language is defensive and perhaps of too high a level for a disadvantaged pupil/parent to follow. No positive targets for future lessons are agreed it is therefore unlikely that Rosie will make great improvements in her history lessons

Mother – Ok. Bye.

**Scenario 2 – Suggested Improvements**

Below is a piece of written communication to a parent/carer on the subject of a pupil’s poor behaviour/academic achievement in maths. The pupil is Bilal (Year 10), and he is from a single parent family – he lives with his dad Mr Hussain. Please consider the suggestions for key errors and how to rectify these then reflect on your thoughts in relation to these suggested improvements.

Dear Mrs Hussain (parent is Mr Hussain – lack of sensitivity and checking),

I am writing to inform you that Bilal is not achieving his target grade in maths (very negative start to the communication, parent is already feeling delated after reading first line). In his most recent assessment, he achieved a grade D (grade D no longer exists), which is really disappointing and just shows her (wrong pronoun – parent will be irritated at lack of personalisation and the fact that the letter is probably cut and paste) lack of commitment to learning in lessons and also poor homework effort (there is no evidence used to back this up e.g. data or amount of homework tasks missed).

Dilal (easily spotted spelling error that shows lack of care) must work harder (how, what concrete actions are needed?) and do all his homework. He will be in subject support sessions every Tuesday lunchtime until his grade improves (where will these take place, what will he do in these sessions, how will he get his lunch, how long will he be doing this – this reads as punishment rather than the support that it is intended as). At home he should use MyMaths to revise lots (revise what and does he have access to technology to do this) and should be aiming to do at least an hour of revision every night on this website (this is too great an ask- what about his other subjects).

It is vital that you make Bilal do this homework and attend the subject support sessions (Bilal’s dad may not feel able to do this, there may be many other factors that are not taken into consideration with this demand) to avoid him falling further behind and failing his maths GCSE (this is far too negative an end to the letter and will likely cause a great amount of worry).

Yours sincerely,

Mr Maths (no contact details or encouragement for a two-way dialogue)

**Scenario 3 – Suggested Improvements**

Below is a written communication to a parent/carer on the topic or home-learning and expectations. The email is sent to a parent (Mrs Brown) of a Year 7 pupil (Poppy Brown) who is more able, highly conscientious but anxious about school and not completing homework set. Please consider the suggestions for how this could be improved to encourage positive parental engagement then reflect on your thoughts in relation to these suggested improvements.

Dear Parent (not personalised in any way),

I am writing to let you know that all Year 7 students should be completing between 2 and 3 hours of homework every night in order to achieve their academic expectations (this is an unrealistic expectation of Year 7 students). Pupils in set 1 will be expected to do more than this (this will cause anxiety to students who are more able and hardworking and is insensitive to individualised needs – a more personalised approach would be much more appropriate, considering if a blanked communication to all Y7 pupils is even necessary).

If students do not do their homework to the best of their ability, they will be put into head of Year detention on a Monday night between 3.30 and 4.30pm (highly conscientious students will naturally go over and above – this needs to be more specific in terms of requirements and expectations and again will increase student anxiety).

Please ensue that you help your son/daughter to complete all of their homework tasks on time and to a high standard (this is not what research suggest is effective, some parents may try to help their child by completing tasks for them or getting overly involved, instead we should encourage parents to support pupils to work independently).

There are no opportunities for a two-way dialogue, which is a key element of effectively communicating with parents.

Yours faithfully,

Bob Seven (not a professional enough way to communicate with parents – Mr Seven should be used)

(Head of Year 7)

**Scenario 4 – Suggested Improvements**

Below is a transcript of a telephone conversation with a parent who has called as they are unhappy with the most recent data that has been sent home concerning their child’s progress. They claim that there are errors with regards to attendance data and achievement/negative behaviour points. This is a hard to reach parent who hasn’t engaged with home-school communications/meetings. Please consider the suggestions for key issues and how these could be handled differently, then reflect on your thoughts in relation to these suggested improvements.

**Parent – I got my son Michael’s report in the post this morning and I’m not happy!**

**Teacher – What are you unhappy about?**

The teacher should greet parent more warmly and thank them for taking an interest in their child’s learning – this would be a much more positive start to the conversation and demonstrate that both the parent and the teacher are on the same side.

**Parent – Well it’s all wrong, you’re telling lies about my son.**

**Teacher – I’m sure that is not the case.**

Instead of accusing the parent of being wrong, it would be better for the teacher to ask the parent what parts of the report they felt were incorrect and to promise to look into this and get back to them at a mutually convenient time.

**Parent – Well I’m telling you that it is wrong, and I want it changing.**

**Teacher – I’ve just checked the document and I can’t see any errors.**

Again this isn’t helpful, this could only serve to discourage further communication between parent and school if they feel that they aren’t listened to and there concerns are not taken seriously.

**Parent – My son does not have 76% attendance and he has not had 27 negative behaviour points; he would have told me about that. Also, his maths teacher says he has not done all of his homework this term and Michael says he has.**

**Teacher – Have you considered that Michael might not be telling you the truth?**

At this point it would have been much more useful to bring the conversation round to focus on learning. A good starting point would be the subjects that he has done well in according to the report and then suggesting strategies for improving in other areas.

**Parent – Are you calling my son a liar?**

**Teacher – No I’m just saying that he may not be as angelic at school as you believe him to be, in fact he’s really disruptive and difficult in a lot of lessons and perhaps you should be more concerned about that than an error in his attendance percentage.**

The teacher is using far too emotive language now and is not discussing learning or attempting to keep the conversation positive. This would make the parent feel blamed for their child’s poor behaviour, rather than that an effective education is a shared responsibility. It is also not conducive to developing the necessary two-way dialogue for successful communication.

**Parent – I’m not discussing this with you anymore, I demand to speak to the Head.**

**Reading List**

* Cruddas, L. *‘Parental engagement is key to overcoming continued disruption’* [www.schoolsweek.co.uk](http://www.schoolsweek.co.uk) (Accessed15/09/2020)
* Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), (2018) *‘Working with Parents to Support Children’s Learning’* <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/working-with-parents-to-support-childrens-learning/>
* Haslam, J., *‘What can parental engagement really do for schools?’* [www.schoolsweek.co.uk](http://www.schoolsweek.co.uk/) (Accessed 13/01/2020)
* Menzies, L. (2013) *Educational Aspirations: How English Schools can work with parents to keep them on track*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

**NQT CPD Opportunities**

**Re-watch slide 10 of the video to recap the importance of building a professional toolkit for working with parents**

* Shadow a senior colleague (your mentor, a member of your department at a parents’ evening.
* Observe a parental/carer meeting – pastoral (with a tutor or Head of Year) and academic (with a class teacher or Head of Department).
* Ask for a more experienced colleague to moderate written reports to be sent home to parents/carers. Ask colleagues to share their reports for you to use as exemplars.
* Ensure that you are familiar with the parental engagement and home learning policies in your school and use these as guidance when communicating with parents/carers.
* Collate a bank of phrases that you can use when contacting parents/carers, practice using these, role play scenarios with your mentor during meetings – how would you respond to different challenging situations?