

Case study: SENDIASS support with exclusions

This case study demonstrates how an IAS service have learnt from experience and changed their tactics in potentially difficult and confrontational meetings - which then helped the parent and child and ensured a supportive and constructive approach rather than a confrontational stance.

The mum of a 15 year old boy rang, extremely upset. Her son is Autistic and has been struggling in school for a long time. He has become anxious about being in school and has developed several behaviours that the school were having problems with.

Despite going into the school several times, mum didn't believe they were putting in the right support.

Just before the end of the summer term (July 18) mum had a phone call saying he had been excluded. This was a "fixed term" exclusion, however the next day mum was told this would be a permanent exclusion.

He attended an academy school, mum had to wait until after the 6 week summer holiday for the Governing Body meeting to be held.

Mum called us to ask for advice and support in the meeting as she was very worried that she wouldn't be able to express her concerns and put forward her arguments for disagreeing with the exclusion.

I met with mum to discuss her thoughts and to look at the paperwork the Head teacher was submitting at the meeting with the Governing Body. We talked about what mum wanted to say and we prepared a list of bullet points.

At the meeting (September) the Governors were very accommodating and explained they were happy to hear from me; to support mum and to raise concerns regarding matters that may arise during discussions.

During the meeting the Head teacher spoke about interventions and support that had been in place leading up to the exclusion. I asked if he could clarify what that support looked like in the school day; his response was very ambiguous and it became apparent that there had been little support in place despite advice on strategies from an EP and mum's contribution at many meetings.

Mum remained calm and continued on with her list of issues that we had previously prepared. There were occasions when mum almost got frustrated and lost her train of thought but we had discussed prior to the meeting how to deal with this and I was able to gently lead her back to the point she was trying to make.

The Governors decided during their private meeting that they would like to see evidence of the support and history of his time in the school. They informed mum that a decision would be made the following day and they would put this in writing to her. Mum was happy with this timescale.

The Governors decision was to reinstate her son, they did not believe that sufficient support had been in place to support him. His difficulties and reason for his exclusion may never have happened if the school had followed the EP's advice, or taken notice of mum's concerns.

Summary for family

Mum and her son were initially overwhelmed. They were incredibly grateful to just being heard. Both had been very stressed and not sleeping, there was tension at home. Her son had been becoming increasingly remote. He said that he thought "that was it", no one would want a child that had been excluded.

My initial meeting with mum helped to clarify and enable her to understand what it was she wanted to say and for us to create a strategy to keep her 'on track' during the meeting.

He is now back in school and is receiving all suggested intervention and support.

It has taken a little while for him to get used to his mentor but he is starting to be able to communicate his needs easier. He is accessing his learning with support and the behaviour issues are lessening.

Conclusion for service development

As a team we have previously found difficulties when involved in Governing Body meetings. Through this situation we learnt that it was more beneficial to support the parent by discussing the plan of action before hand, modelling behaviour and developing a strategy that the parent could work with to remain on track in the meeting. By being there we were able to support and prompt the parent and it was felt that our presence was accepted far better. We have felt previously that the school/governors expect our role to be more confrontational and because of that display a difficult stance with us from the beginning. This can result in not only a difficult atmosphere for all but can also affect outcomes and future relations negatively.