

...because *YOUR* child matters

# Bedford Parent Partnership Service



## About us

The Bedford Borough Parent Partnership Service provides a free, confidential and impartial service for parents of children with special educational needs.



Left to right: Elaine Taylor (admin), Ruth Kerr (adviser), David Newbury (coordinator) and Adele Norman (adviser).

You can download information from our website, including past newsletters and information leaflets on [www.bedfordshireparentpartnership.co.uk](http://www.bedfordshireparentpartnership.co.uk). This website is still shared with the Central Bedfordshire Parent Partnership Service. We will be moving offices at some point and will of course let you know any new contact details.

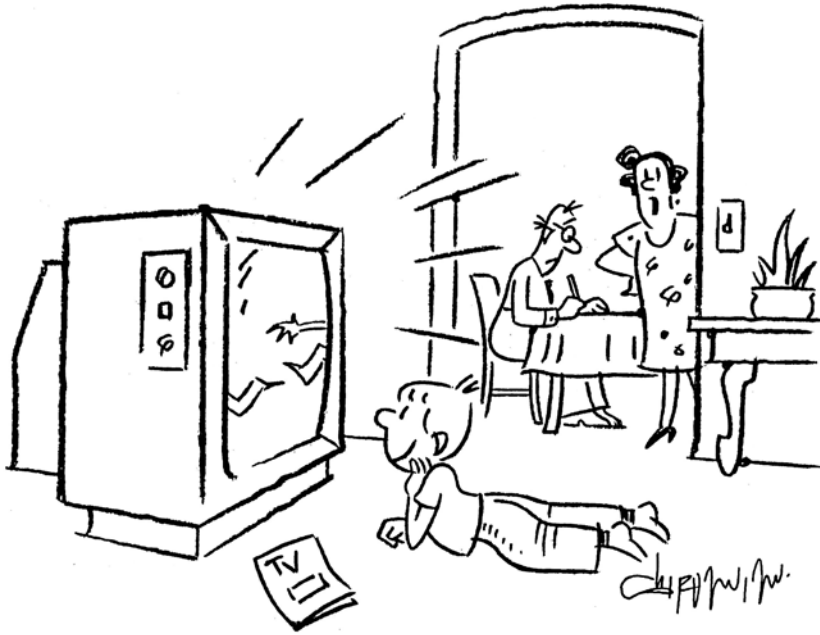
Jo Maule, our School Transfer Adviser, who has worked in the team for over three years, has now moved to a new job. We will all miss her but wish her well and know that she will do a fantastic job in her new role as Manager of the Wilstead and Great Barford Children's Centres. We have not got a new Transfer Adviser yet, so please contact the Admissions Team (01234 718 120) if you need help

## Welcome

**Welcome to the Bedford Parent Partnership Service Autumn newsletter. If your child's school has given you this and you have not heard about us before please read on. We ask schools to give our newsletters to their children who have special educational needs. If you are not sure what this means, we are at the end of the 'phone (01234 316 353) and can explain it to you.**



The Bedford Parent Partnership Service covers the areas shown on the above map.



"Please turn it down - Daddy's trying to do your homework."

We have found that one of the main issues is that children do not understand what they are supposed to do for their homework. Sometimes they haven't written it down in a way that the parents understand either, which makes it difficult for parents to help. Parents of children with hidden disabilities like ADHD, Dyslexia Autistic Spectrum Disorders say that their children are very tired when they come home, because they have had to cope with a lot, quite apart from the work, to get through a school day. These parents also say that their children want to separate home and school and are not willing to tackle anything at home, like homework, which is related to school. We hear of battles and tantrums, parents feeling they need to do the homework for their children, so that they don't appear to be behind.

## Photographic Competition

Have you heard about a photographic competition that the Downs Syndrome association are organising?

'My Perspective' is the first ever photography competition for people with Down's syndrome! If you follow this weblink you will find out more information: <http://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/fundraising/shifting-perspectives/my-perspective-photographic-award.html>



## Homework!

One of the most common conversations we have with parents is about homework. Many parents tell us of battles and tantrums at home because their children struggle with homework, so we hope this article will help. You may be aware of the national debate about homework at the moment as many people are questioning the usefulness of homework, particularly in the early years and many feel that children need time to rest and play more than they do.

There is nothing new about children not wanting to do homework and there is nothing new about some of the excuses for not doing it. Here are some of the very best:

“A sudden wind blew it out of my hand and I never saw it again;”

“Another pupil fell in a lake, and I jumped in to rescue him but unfortunately my homework drowned.”

The best thing to do, if there is a problem with homework, is to let the school know and arrange to talk about it with your child's teacher. Ask your child's school about their homework clubs as most offer these and have staff on hand to help pupils. Your child may like the idea of going to a homework club to do their work so they can come home to relax and forget about school.

The library service has an on-line virtual homework club to give help which you can use by following the link: [http://www.galaxy.bedfordshire.gov.uk/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.children\\_teenagers/vhc\\_home.htm](http://www.galaxy.bedfordshire.gov.uk/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.children_teenagers/vhc_home.htm)

Lots of children go to the library to do their homework, so that they can find out information from the library books, but also to use the computers. Libraries allow children to use a computer for one hour, free of charge and it is possible to print documents which they will need to pay for, 10p for one A4 black and white print-out, 35p for the same in colour.

**We asked the Educational Psychology service for their top tips for homework and they recommend the following:**

- ✓ Make sure your child has a quiet, well- lit place to do homework. Avoid distractions and working with the television on!
- ✓ Establish a set time each day for doing homework. Don't let your child leave homework until just before bed-time. Help your child with time management, by breaking down projects into manageable tasks.
- ✓ Make sure your child has the appropriate materials.
- ✓ Be positive about homework. Your attitude about homework will be the attitude your child takes!
- ✓ When your child does homework lead by example and sit down and read or do some homework eg. Make a shopping list! This will show your child that the skills they are learning are directly related to things you do as an adult.
- ✓ When your child asks for help, provide guidance, and encouragement, not answers! Giving answers means your child will not learn the material. Too much help teaches the child that when the going gets rough, someone will do the work for them.
- ✓ Co-operate with the teacher by playing a supportive role in your child's homework. It shows your child that you are a team working together.
- ✓ If homework is meant to be completed by your child alone then stay away. Homework is a great way for kids to develop independent, lifelong learning skills.
- ✓ Stay informed. Make sure there is good communication between you and the teacher and you know the purpose of the homework set.
- ✓ Help your child work out which homework is hard and which is easy. This means that they can prioritise, and do the hard homework first, when they are most alert.
- ✓ Watch your child for signs of failure and frustration. Let your child take a short break if she/he is having trouble keeping their mind on the task.
- ✓ Always reward progress with praise! If your child makes a huge effort in completing homework and is working hard, celebrate that success in whatever way you feel you can.

Please 'phone if you want to discuss any issues you have and we will do our best to support you.

## Looking Good

Mencap have commissioned a fashion photo shoot by Gary Harvey and he has produced some very attractive photos of adults with learning disabilities.



They have given us permission to print one in this issue, as we felt it portrays such a lively and positive image of disability.

Photographs from Viewpoint, the learning disability magazine produced by Mencap.

[www.mencap.org.uk/viewpoint](http://www.mencap.org.uk/viewpoint)  
(follow the link to read more about the project)



## The Bedford team

In a five minute interview with the new Bedford Coordinator, David Newbury talks about his background and vision for our work:

### What is your new job?

Coordinator of the Bedford Borough Parent Partnership Service

### Your job in a sentence?

Our service does everything it can to make sure that all parents can have independent, impartial advice about their children's special educational needs (SEN) and help to get their point of view heard by professionals.

### What's the most challenging part of your job?

It can be difficult helping parents resolve conflicts about their child through dialogue and cooperation with schools and the Local Authority. There are often quite complex issues to resolve but it's frequently

## Celebrating excellence in Bedford Borough!

We want to put good news about Special Educational Needs in our newsletters, and so are starting a new feature from the next issue. Please send us your news!

exhilarating to see how much we can achieve through goodwill.

### What's the most rewarding part of your job?

A happy child doing well in school (which means happy parents too!)

### What have the influences been in your life?

My two years teaching on the edge of the Sahara desert in Northern Nigeria were an amazing 'eye opening' experience, even though this was over 30 years ago. Being introduced to Buddhism was also a life changing experience.

### Have you got a favourite motto/ saying?

World peace starts with the transformation of an individual's heart

### From people, past and present, who would you invite to dinner and why?

I think Mikhail Gorbachev would make a fascinating dinner guest and I must confess to having a soft spot for Sandra Bullock

### What book/ music/ luxury item would you take on your desert island?

'Three Men in a Boat' always makes me laugh; currently Abbey Road; a sofa.

## Bedford Borough Parent Partnership Service

Westfield Middle School  
Chester Road  
Bedford  
MK40 4HW

e: [parent.partnership@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:parent.partnership@bedford.gov.uk)

t: 01234 316 353



## The Lamb Inquiry

Has been in the news this year and a lot of us took part by letting the Inquiry know our views. The aim of the Inquiry was to look at ways of making parents feel more confident in the SEN system of assessment and provision. A number of recommendations have come out of the Inquiry, including:

- Local Authorities need to write better quality and clearer Statements of SEN
- Parents should have the right of appeal if the Local Authority refuses to change a Statement after an Annual Review
- Parents and pupils should be more involved in Annual Reviews
- Ofsted should look more closely at schools' support of pupils with SEN
- The Government should extend the idea of running projects to develop good practice.

The final report will be out before Christmas.

## School Structures

We are in a time of uncertainty as we wait for a decision by Bedford Borough about our school structures. We sensed parents' anxiety as we followed the consultation last term and consequently arranged some meetings specifically for parents of children with SEN, to discuss issues of concern to them. Please 'phone us if you have any more questions or would like to talk about your concerns.

We are also in the middle of the Consultation on Future Special School Provision. The Consultation ends on 6 November, and if you would like a copy of the paper, give us a ring.



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BOROUGH COUNCIL