

My child has learning problems

All parents want the best for their children and they hope they will be happy and get on well in school. If you are worried that your child may be having difficulties at school, how do you get something done about it?

Step 1: Talking to the school.

Your first step is to talk to the school. Ask them what they think and tell them what you feel. Remember that difficulties with behaviour and how your child relates to others can be as important as difficulties with lessons.

What sort of questions could you ask?

Five questions to find out the school's view:

- Does the school think my child is having any difficulty?
- Has my child been set any targets?
- Is my child at the same level as most other children in the class?
- What do the results of my child's SATS or other tests or assessments mean?
- Is my child already getting extra help?

It is best to start with your child's teacher or year tutor. Sometimes that will be enough to put your mind at rest. Try to write down your queries and questions point by point. Ask a friend to help. Going through everything with someone else first makes it easier to talk to the teacher.

What points could you make?

- Say what particular problems are worrying you - no matter how big or small.
- Say when you first noticed any problems. Did you mention it to anyone?
- Are the problems getting worse? How long have they been getting worse?
- Say if anyone else in the family has similar problems.
- Is this putting your child off school or making them unhappy? Say how your child feels.
- Has your child's behaviour changed at home or at school? Is their behaviour at home different from school? Give examples.
- Any health or other problems? What do you think would help? Perhaps your child could change seats in class or have more one-to-one help.
- Has your child ever had any help that seemed to work?
- Are you doing anything to help at home? Can the school suggest any better ways for you to try?
- Don't forget, if a family has problems at home this can bother children. It may help the school to know if a death, divorce or some other upset has affected your family.

- Do you think your child's progress is good enough ("adequate")? If not say so and if possible say why. Perhaps your child has difficulty with organising themselves, managing their homework or reaching targets?

Schools should find out what children think and take notice of their views. It is now very important that you find out exactly what your child feels. Go through as many of your points as possible with your child. Some children may want to write their own report.

