In Brief: Working together through consultation

Consultation is a discussion held with the aim of sharing knowledge and opinions before making a decision. Schools need to consult so that they have information about the best way to teach and support all their students.

Getting the most out of consultation

Ask for a meeting before problems come up.

Before the meeting:

Work out the purpose of the meeting and what everyone might want.

Work out who needs to attend.

Useful information to bring:

If the purpose is ‘Getting to know the student’ – take information on your child’s strengths.

If the purpose is ‘Adjustments’ – take reports that will help the teacher to work out the best support for your child, e.g. reports from occupational therapists, paediatricians, or psychologists.

During the meeting

Focus on the needs of the student.

Listen respectfully to each other without criticising.

Speak openly and honestly. Hiding information so that people feel better does not help the student.

Stay calm. It is better to take a break during the meeting than to be upset. Bring a person to help you if you find meetings difficult.

Before the meeting ends

Work out if anyone else needs to be present at future meetings.
Decide when to meet again to check how things are going.
Agree on how to communicate going forward.
Write down what everyone has agreed and what each person will do and when.
Consultation is an ongoing process. You may need several meetings to reach agreement on an issue.