

Sense College - Operational Strategy

Parental Engagement

Information



Outcomes

In order to ensure an effective process of co-production with learners and their families, the purpose and aims of parental engagement within college needs to be clear:

- To work to the principles of the SEND Code of Practice (2014);
- To work to the principles of the Mental Capacity Act (2005);
- To work to the principles of the Equality Act (2010);
- To support learners via home and family to get the best from high quality teaching, learning and educational support;
- To support the informed decision-making skills of learners with parents' support;
- To ensure that parents are involved in decision-making;
- To ensure that staff have the skills required to seek and respond effectively to the views of all parents;
- To ensure that when parents' voice opinions, they are responded to;
- To provide information about how parents' voices can be heard;
- To ensure the views of parents inform quality improvement;
- To ensure all communications between a learner's home/parents and college are polite and respectful;
- To monitor effectiveness of the avenues for parental communications.

For the college parental engagement strategy to be effective, it is important that staff are clear about its purposes and understand the processes, protocols and outcomes; and above all, perceive it as an effective and supportive mechanism for raising standards and learner experiences. Staff will monitor the effectiveness of the policy and contribute to its development through meetings and the college's quality assurance systems.



Who is this strategy for?

This strategy is for Sense College staff working with learners funded by the ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency), in addition to:

- The Parents¹ of learners that Sense College supports
- All College Staff and Volunteers, including Executive Principal, Head of College and College Senior Management Team
- Governors
- Stakeholders

What is this strategy about?

Sense College regards the process of parental engagement as an essential strand within our commitment to co-production and is all about:

- The perspectives and ideas of parents in support of the learner;
- Taking into account what everyone has to say;
- Taking informed risks;
- Sharing and listening;
- Engaging and working together in partnership;
- Ensuring communications remain polite and respectful.

One of the Sense College's fundamental beliefs is that everyone accessing and supporting an individual at the college has a voice to be heard and that the opportunity to share and express opinions and views, is at the core of the holistic learning experience.

¹ • Throughout this document, in the context of the strategy, the term 'parent(s)' is inclusive of parents, carers and/or family members who act as next of kin and guardian to the individual/learner and who provides daily support/advocacy.



The college views parental engagement as a means to include true empowerment and engagement from parents and families that will encourage learners to become active members of their learning community.

Sense College will do this by developing a culture where parents are:

- Encouraged to give constructive feedback;
- See their feedback is taken seriously;
- See that staff have the skills to encourage and respond positively to feedback.

In return, the college expects parents to:

- Engage and participate in review meetings and progress discussions to support the learner;
- Communicate and liaise with all college staff in a polite and respectful manner;
- Treat others as you wish to be treated yourself.



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Overview

Introduction:

Sense College is committed to providing an outstanding learning environment which ensures all our learners and supportive families have an opportunity to be involved and have a voice in the college community.

Our aim is to create and foster an open and honest partnership with Parents to support learning with a collaborative approach.

We believe that when families are engaged with the college and with their son/daughter's education, then learners are better able to learn and meet their personal outcomes and goals.

This engagement strategy will be pursued under strong leadership, following a clear vision embedded in the culture of the college and shared by all staff.

Engagement is taken to include:

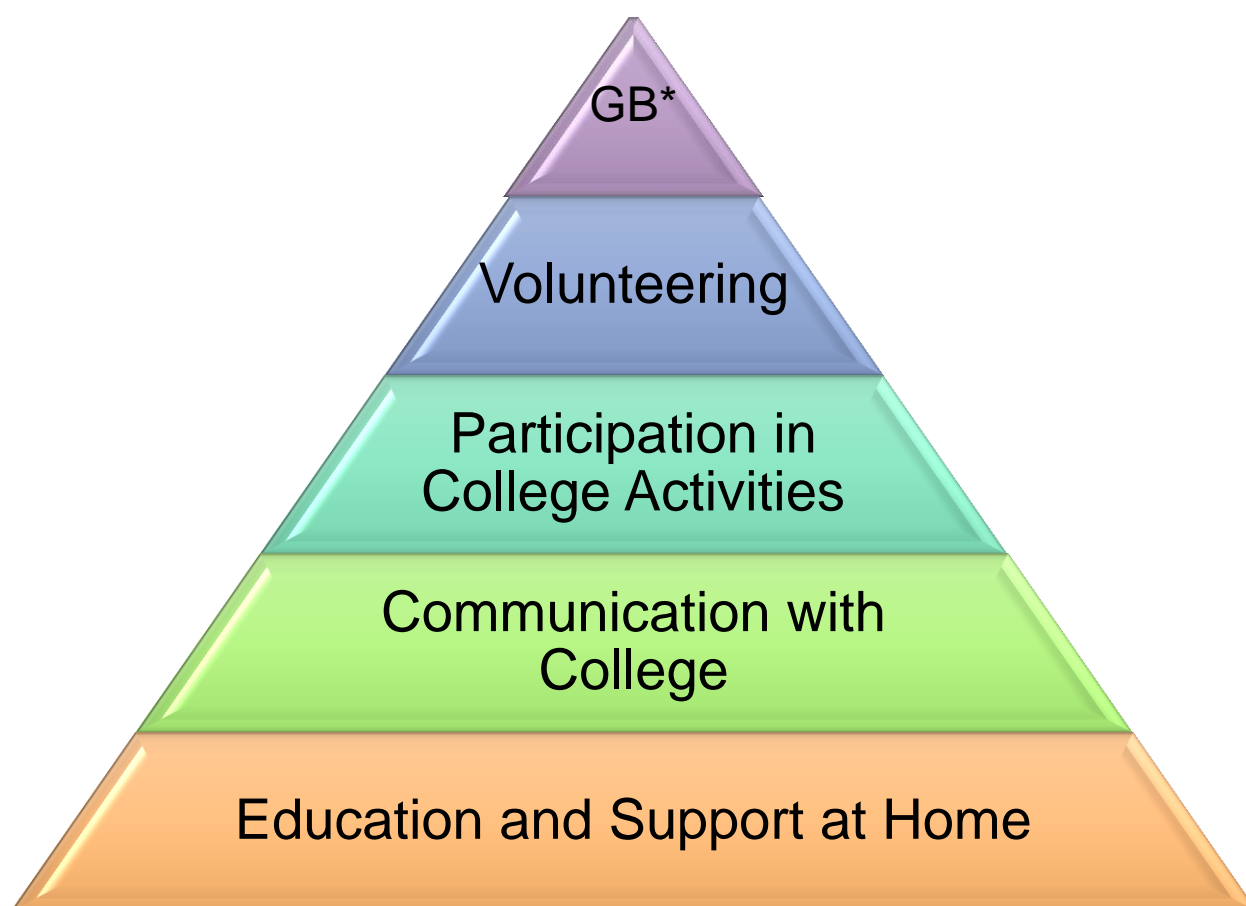
- **Home – College Partnership, including conduct agreement**
- **Communication**
- **In-College Activities/Participation**
- **Decision Making**



Parental Involvement Pyramid:

Our strategy is based on the following key points:

- Parents feel welcomed and included;
- Leadership identifies parent involvement as an important component and values their participation;
- Information is available and/or presented in a variety of methods;
- Parents are treated as equal partners;
- Mutual politeness and respect exists between parents and college;
- Provide support and resources where possible to address parents' issues and concerns.



* GB = College Leadership and the Governing Body



Engagement

Part One: Home – College Partnership

The college will work to build strong partnerships with parents and families based on the collaboration with transitions, programme planning and review, attitudes and values, aspirations and goal setting, behaviour support and transferring of skills. Parents will be given specific, detailed guidance on programmes and on their expected contribution.

Staff recognise that parents have a wealth of knowledge and experience; therefore the college will listen to parents' views and value their input. Sense College will actively involve parents in assessment, target setting and the reviewing learning progress, as well as being a key component in the Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) Reviews.

The college will also work to raise parents' and learners' aspirations, ensuring a 'can do' culture pervades the college. Practical guidance is available for parents on how they can support the progress of their son/daughter.

Parents should be prepared to safe challenge, and be safe challenged themselves by staff, in order to ensure the safeguarding of learners.

Parents will have the opportunity to build relationships with the core education staff members associated with the learner. These key contacts and staff for the first line of enquiry could be:

- The Personal Tutor / Education Coordinator for the learning programme;
- Education Services Managers (ESMs) (and/or Deputies) for contractual/centre issues;
- Education Transition and Reviewing Officers (ETROs) who will provide support to the family at review meetings and guidance at crucial periods of transition.



In addition to the key contacts listed above, parents may engage with members of the College Senior Management Team and/or Governors, as part of quality assurance processes.

Part Two: Home-College Agreement

Sense College regards the process of parental engagement as an essential strand with the commitment to co-production, for the benefit of learners.

To enable a harmonious working relationship between home and college, a culture of respectful behaviour and conduct must be agreed by both parents and college staff.

A Home-College Agreement (Appendix 1) is in place to ensure understanding of respectful collaboration, which is required to be completed by the parents at the start of a learners placement at the college.

Sense College is proud to say that:

- We listen;
- We understand and respond;
- We respect others;
- We are honest and open.

We will include and collaborate to find a way to support learners together with parents as well as the learner themselves.

Posters are displayed around the college to reinforce our commitment to **Positive Behaviour and Conduct (Appendix 2)** to remind all stakeholders to be considerate to others



Part Three: Communication

Sense College promotes an active communication environment. Parents will be listened to as active partners and will receive clear, specific and relevant information from the college. The college will regularly consult with parents on a range of matters and ensure they 'have a voice'.

A close working relationship built on trust will facilitate effective communication and allow parties to communicate difficult, as well as positive, messages.

A range of flexible, tailored methods of communication will be used in timely ways.

Methods can include:

- Morning / Afternoon Handovers
- Daily Communication Book
- Informal Catch Ups / Telephone Calls
- Emails
- Transition Questionnaires
- Annual Parent Surveys
- Newsletters
- Websites / Social Media
- Text / Instant Messaging
- Skype / Video Conferencing

Parents are given an information pack at the start of the learners placement, with updates at the start of each academic year, including relevant strategies and policies, a 'who's who' guide so they know who to contact (including managers and Governing Body) and a calendar with details of holidays and events taking place during the college year.



The college is further developing its use of ICT (Information Communications Technology) to improve knowledge sharing and communications with parents, to provide information and engagement opportunities. The Sense website is undergoing development and improvement as well, but you will find a section dedicated to the college which contains contact details, information on the college centres and programmes, as well as key policies and information sheets.

The college area of the website can be found via <https://www.sense.org.uk/content/sense-college>

The college continually reviews its Digital Capabilities and Wellbeing Strategy which focuses on ILT (Information Learning Technologies) Strategy and part of this work may see the future use of texting to support communication developed and introduced.

Part Four: In-College Activities

Sense College encourages parents, carers and the wider family to take an active part in college life.

Each centre will have a diary of events taking place throughout the year and staff will share opportunities to get involved as well as identify parents' skills and interests, and to use these to facilitate further engagement with the curriculum and college life where appropriate.

Parents can get involved in a plethora of ways, such as:

- Volunteering
- Helping in Classrooms
- Field Trips



- Open Days
- Family Workshops
- Celebration Days
- After-College Clubs
- College Productions / Performances
- Sports Days
- Charity Events / Coffee Mornings

Part Five: Decision Making

Parents are encouraged to take an active role in the review and planning of learning.

Learning and Progress Reviews

Attendance at and contribution to transition reviews, end of term progress meetings and annual reviews (including EHC Plan reviews) is valuable and provides opportunities to fully engage in the learning and next steps decision making of their son/daughter. Progress review meetings provide avenues for parents to evaluate the progress of goals, targets, attendance and learner engagement as well as contribute to the future planning of next steps. Wherever possible, the college will be flexible with the timing of meetings/reviews and will do their best to ensure that parents can attend. A **Schedule of Review Meetings** that occur during the academic year can be found at **Appendix 3**.

Transitions

The college's ETROs (Education Transition and Reviewing Officers) will maintain contact with the learner and their family in conjunction with the ESM and Personal Tutor/EC and support parents with initial assessment, transition into college, in college programme changes and transition out of college education.



They will work with learners and parents by offering practical advice, identifying appropriate destinations and providing sources of further advice and support.

Strategic Planning

A place on the college's Governing Body is reserved for parents of educational learners and provides an opportunity for parental voice and involvement in the review, planning and decision making of the college, at a strategic level.

Any interest in joining the Governing Body can be emailed to college.enquiries@sense.org.uk or by phoning 01733 425053.

Quality Assurance

The effectiveness of the strategy will be monitored and evaluated regularly, ensuring that there remains a clear, consistent focus on raising learners' achievement and positive engagement with parents.

The monitoring process will include feedback from:

- Transition Questionnaires
- Annual Parent Surveys
- Compliments and/or Complaints
- Feedback from Review Meetings and/or discussions

The information and findings from these will be fed into the college self-assessment procedures and support continued quality assurance and improvement.



This policy and procedure will be reviewed:

- Annually
- As the need arises
- Following feedback on the documentation

Conclusion

Sense College believes that an effective system of embedding parental engagement can significantly enhance the quality of provision by raising standards, increasing learner achievements and supporting staff to develop their practice.

Benefits for Learners

- Increased attendance
- Improved attainment/achievement
- Increased motivation
- Higher levels of confidence and self-esteem
- Better social skills
- Improved behaviour
- Improved home-college transferrable use of skills



Benefits for Parents

- Increased support for college
- Increased confidence and skills to support learning
- Shared understanding of education
- Raised aspirations

Benefits for College

- College can access parents' skills to compliment teaching and learning
- Improved learner attendance and behaviour
- Improved relationships between college, families, community and stakeholders
- Higher learner achievements

For Quality Assurance Use only:

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