

Bower Grove Support

Support for the Wider Community 1993 - 2014
For Families of Children with Special Needs



Bower Grove School Fant Lane Maidstone Kent ME16 8NL

AUTUMN 2014 NEWSLETTER

FULL HOUSE FOR MAIDSTONE SEN REFORMS WORKSHOP



Hi! I hope you had a good summer. It was

great to see so many of you throughout the year. Our last workshop of term was a SEN Reforms Workshop re the Children and Families Act that we facilitated for the Kent Parent Carer Forum.

We were delighted that over 100 people from all around Maidstone and beyond joined us for this workshop including 18 professionals and 4 governors. Please see more information and links re Children and Families Act and SEN Reforms on page 5.

This year we had a good mix of meetings and Coffee Mornings including some key workshops. We covered Benefits, ASD Current Approaches, Behaviour Management – A Parents Survival Guide, a talk about the Kent Parent Partnership Service and the SEN Reforms Workshop. If there is a special subject you would like covered please email me Jo Cousins at psg.bowergrove@btinternet.com or speak to me at one of the meetings and I will do my best to help.



See a synopsis of key meetings throughout the newsletter and information and links about the SEN Reforms and Local Offer. Please also see the autumn programme below.

Josephine Cousins

AUTUMN 2014 PROGRAMME - OPEN TO ALL SCHOOLS

Friday 19 th September 10.15am–12noon	 COFFEE MORNING 'Strictly No Work–Just Chat' Please join us for an informal chat to meet other parents & carers.
Friday 3 rd October 10.15am–12noon	KENT AUTISTIC TRUST: Jo Blamires will be joining us to discuss the services available from the Kent Autistic Trust. All are welcome to join us.
Friday 21 st November 10.15am- 12noon	ADHD – Pam Stephens joins us for a talk about ADHD and strategies that may help. All welcome to join us.
Friday 5 th December 10.15am–12noon	 COFFEE MORNING 'Strictly No Work–Just Chat' Please join us for an informal chat to meet other parents & carers.

BENEFITS WORKSHOP



A representative from Contact a Family joined us to discuss the Benefits system. This meeting was open to all parents and carers of children with special educational needs or disabilities; one or two practitioners and staff from other schools and organisations were able to join us on the day to gain information including from Five Acre Wood School and Family Action.

Unfortunately, we still meet some parents who have somehow managed to fall through the net and are not aware or understand that they are entitled to claim non-means tested benefits for their children; or are not receiving all the benefits they are entitled to. The meeting was advertised to schools and settings in the Maidstone and surrounding area.

The talk provided information for those just starting out and for those with older children. Benefits change when your children approach their 16th birthday. ([Key non-means tested benefits were also covered](#))

For those new to the Benefits system a tick box *General Benefits Information sheet* was provided covering Disability Living Allowance (DLA) which is a non-means tested benefit and Carers Allowance.

Personal Independence Payment (pip) was also discussed; this is a payment that will replace DLA with new assessment and new rules for people aged 16years and over.

Housing Benefits, 'Bedroom Tax' and Tax Credits were also discussed.

At the end of the session there were handouts covering the main points. Copies of these are available on the Contact a Family website:

www.cafamily.org.uk Free phone helpline: 0808 808 3555



Please also take a look at our Bower Grove Parent Support page, where you will find more Benefits information with links to other organisations that can be of help.

Go to: www.bower-grove.kent.sch.uk Select **Parent Support** and then the **Key Links page** for a range of SEN information and much more. You will also see a link to **About the KCC Local Offer**; see more information about this on page six.

ASD - CURRENT APPROACHES



On 27th June Jackie Golds, Assistant Head Teacher and Suzanne Bachelor, Speech and Language therapist, Bower Grove School, joined us for an **Autism Current Approaches** workshop for parents and carers. They had recently attended an Autism conference, 'The Autism Show' and were able to hear first-hand experiences of life with autism and gain access to the largest assembly of autism specialist information, advice and resources in one place. A great deal of this information can be found on the National Autistic Society website: <http://www.autism.org.uk/>

Jackie and Suzanne explained how they came back with their hands full of literature and information and were able to share this with us. They were also able to talk about the current approaches used at Bower Grove School.

KEY MESSAGE: The key message from the talk was that the Government has ring-fenced £4.5 million; part of which will be spent on the new Autism innovation project to “help drive creative and cost-effective solutions, and identify new models of good practice”. The main aim is to raise Awareness and Understanding of Autism and to allow for all to have the same Opportunities and Right Support. Key to this is to minimise the impact of limited understanding, to increase training for GPs and hospital staff, to build links, better understanding and sharing of information. Suzanne and Jackie pointed out how obtaining a fast diagnosis is good but what services follow on from that point are key and have the greatest impact on how well the person in question can be helped. It's not so good if a late diagnosis has occurred and all that vital time has been lost. A support package should follow within 3 months of an assessment.

PLEASE SEE A FEW NOTES FROM THE TALK BELOW; I HAVE JUST INCLUDED A FEW POINTS UNDER EACH HEADING.

ANXIETY: There were some very informative speakers at the conference and Jackie and Suzanne spoke about one speaker who was herself Autistic. This lady spoke about her own experience and triggers for anxiety, in her case bullying, and the effect it had on her. Her talk on Anxiety highlighted how it can hide true ability and outlined its causes, ranging from genetics to traumatic experience etc. She also outlined some Triggers, Symptoms and Techniques to help alleviate the problems; these included breathing, diary keeping, exercise, meditation, social groups, medication, structure and routine, counselling (CBT) and using personal interests.

STRATEGIES: Suzanne then discussed how we all have our own level of anxiety and how it is useful to look for clues in our children to help them plan a way through, i.e. a notebook in school to highlight what to take to each lesson, what to bring home and to note what they are doing that day can also be helpful for some children. It is important to try to help your child identify what the main stresses are and work out a strategy to help.

WOMEN AND GIRLS: A website: **Autism in Pink** was mentioned during the talk; this website contains more research into women and girls with autism. Women and girls are often diagnosed later than boys because girls have better social skills and are able to mask how they feel by mimicking others. There is an on-line book, **Asperkids**, by Jennifer Cooke O'Toole, and there are learning modules available from **Autismpink.net**

LANGUAGE COLOUR CODING (LCC): Dawn Ralph, Clinical Specialist SLT, from St Mary's Bexhill discussed vocabulary development. Dawn particularly made reference to students with Autism needing to be taught grammatical skills (e.g. nouns, verbs etc)

Over the page please see Bower Grove School Approaches and some key websites and links.

BOWER GROVE SCHOOL APPROACHES: At Bower Grove a specially designed Language Colour Coding (LCC) programme is used. This enabled the students to learn the specifics of grammar. This is an excellent aid to help pupils with their language and exam results. Recognising some key words by colour code e.g. verbs, nouns, adjectives etc and connecting these with learning how to recognise feeling, action and emotions can transform a piece of work such as an essay in English to gain a higher mark.

Language Colour Coding - Used at Bower Grove School

- **When (time words) = green**
- **Nouns (who and what) = orange**
- **Verb (action) = purple**
- **Where (location) = red**
- **Adjectives (describing) = blue**
- **Adverbs = Light blue**
- **Connectives (conjunctions) = black (white background)**
- **Pronouns = Gold/peach**
- **Prepositions = light red (pink)**

SLEEPLESSNESS: Problems and their management in children with ASD were discussed at the conference. There are many factors and no magic answers. Some children have deficiencies in melatonin – either suppressed or absent; research shows a possible genetic aspect. Jackie and Suzanne discussed strategies that can work for some children such as keeping to a routine, environment – comfortable/dark, consistency/timings etc, Weighted Blankets have proved to be a success for some people; a parent present mentioned how the Kent Autistic Trust loan Weighted Blankets so you can try before you buy to see if it helps your child. Research by Engelhard (2013) highlighted the adverse effects of TV and computer games on sleep. Another suggestion by Jackie and Suzanne was if you have an appointment with a paediatrician turn up with a diary of events, otherwise you will be asked to go away and do just that and return at a later date. This is to try to establish what is happening and to find possible solutions.

Dr Luci Wiggs – www.researchautism.net publish booklets and useful tools.

OTHER USEFUL WEBSITES AND LINKS:

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

<http://www.nice.org.uk/>

UK charity provide information, support and pioneering services.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/>

Information about sleep hygiene and good routines.
(Booklet format available around current research)

www.autismspeaks.org

UK charity aiming to improve the quality of life for people with ASD. www.researchautism.net

Free online discussions, research and keeping up to date.

<http://network.autism.org.uk>

OTHER RESOURCES - DISPLAYED

There were many resources on display during the talk and as soon as I have a complete list I'll place them on our Bower Grove Parent Support page on the school website.

SEN REFORMS WORKSHOP

Children & families Act 2014

The new Children & Families Act is due to be introduced in September 2014, which will mean the biggest changes to the SEN system for 30 years. This will affect all families with children with disabilities or additional needs 0-25 years.



As mentioned on the first page we were delighted to see so many parents and carers join us for the SEN Reforms workshop; 105+ people attended including 18 professionals and 4 governors. These workshops have been held across the County.

Sarah SelbyBird from the Kent Parent Carer Forum, <http://www.kpcf.co.uk/> gave a thorough and very clear PowerPoint overview of the SEN Reforms. She explained how the Reforms will affect children and young people 0-25 years with additional needs or disabilities and provided information about the background to the Children's and Families Act 2014. Sarah also covered Personal Budgets, Education Health Care Plans, the Local Offer and more. (see information about the Local Offer page 6).

Sarah talked about the role of the Kent Parent Carer Forum and Parent Participation. She pointed out that the **Kent Parent Carer Forum** cannot discuss how this change in legislation **will affect individuals** or whether or not the legislation will bring a positive change for your child. Please see links below to where you can go for help and ask questions.

I tried to contact everyone who attended the talk but was unable to decipher a few email addresses. If you were unable to pick up a pack of key information on the day please email me; Josephine Cousins at psq.bowergrove@btinternet.com and I'll email you a copy of the PowerPoint presentation and other documents handed out on the day.

For more information please see links suggested on the day of where you can go for help:

These links can also be found on our Bower Grove Parent Support page on the school website: www.bower-grove.kent.sch.uk and select **Parent Support** then click on Key Links and SEN Information.

SUGGESTED LINKS:

Your SEN Officer or SENCO at School

Parent Partnership Service <http://www.kent.gov.uk/kpps>

Kent Parent Carer Forum <http://www.kpcf.co.uk/>

Council for Disabled Children www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk

SEND Pathfinder <http://www.sendpathfinder.co.uk>

IPSEA www.ipsea.org.uk

SE7 Pathfinder <http://www.se7pathfinder.co.uk>

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL OFFER

A key component of the Children and Families Act 2014 is for every local authority to provide a 'Local Offer'. <http://www.kent.gov.uk/home>



Further information and **key updated links** can be found on our website: www.bower-grove.kent.sch.uk and select **parent support**.

Kent County Council (KCC) is developing an interactive website, which will contain information about services available for children and young people with Special Needs and Disabilities and their families. This will also provide information about universal services and how to access targeted or specialist services with an explanation about the criteria or threshold. It will also explain where you can get advice or help if you don't meet the criteria.

As mentioned on the KCC website, the information will include:

- arrangements for identifying and assessing children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities
- how to access services and how we make decisions
- arrangements for supporting children and young people move between school phases
- services to support young people prepare for adulthood and independence
- arrangements for resolving disagreements, complaints, mediation and appealing to the SEN Tribunal
- sources of support, advice and information
- information for feedback and review of the local offer.

MESSAGE FOR NEW PARENTS AND CARERS

If you are reading this newsletter for the first time I hope you found it interesting. Our workshops and meetings are free and open to all parents/carers regardless of your child's age, with or without a diagnosis, and that includes any other school and **there is no need to book**.



Family members and young children are welcome to join our informal meetings too. We see parents and carers of children of all ages and cover a wide range and area of topics including workshops on Anger Management, Behaviour, Speech and Language, Autistic Spectrum Conditions, ADHD, the Benefits system and much more. We have accrued a host of specialist speakers and utilise the expertise within Bower Grove School. If you would like a subject or topic covered please contact me, Jo Cousins at psg.bowergrove@btinternet.com and I will do my best to help.

Please join us for an informal chat and coffee at our next meeting; you will be sure of a warm welcome. Please see further contact details at the bottom of the page. Our Coffee mornings are always very informal and are usually much smaller than the workshops so it gives parents and carers more of an opportunity to talk and share information. If you are joining us for the first time there is no need to book just ask at reception for Jo Cousins and I'll meet you there. Please see full programme on the first page.

Josephine Cousins

BOWER GROVE PARENT SUPPORT

CONTACT: Josephine Cousins Tel: 01622 726773 (during school hours)

Web: www.bower-grove.kent.sch.uk and select **Parent Support**

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