



THE FAMILY SCHOOL
LONDON

Parents' Handbook

Advice for parents, written by parents



Caring for young minds

Anna Freud  **Centre**

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An Anna Freud Initiative

The Family School is unique in providing an environment in which pupils, their families, teachers and health professionals work as a community to bring about positive change in classroom behaviour and learning. Starting with some of the most vulnerable children, it already

as a strong record of success in getting excluded or close-to-exclusion pupils productively back into mainstream school. It's Department for Education approved standards of teaching and learning enable real educational progress to be made throughout the process.

Welcome...

Welcome to the Family School. As parents, all of us here have experienced the feelings you may be having right now, of strangeness, worry and insecurity at the thought of your child changing school. And that's apart from the strangeness of attending school as a parent yourself.

This booklet can tell you what it all felt like when we joined, and also what we and our children got out of it.

One of the most positive things was the support of the other parents, and that's what we all offer to you.

"I find it really helpful. It's good to be able to sit down and talk with other parents that have got similar problems. They can give you ideas about how to cope with a situation at home."

Mother of 8 year old daughter



What is Family School?

The Family School helps children stay in, or get back into, mainstream school. It does this by providing solid education at the same time as support in dealing with the issues and crises that often block learning.

The unique thing about it is that this activity takes place within a group of families supported by teachers,

therapists and health experts. The community that results is large and diverse enough to function as a 'mini-world' in which children can take on new knowledge, new coping strategies and new relationship skills, confident that all of these will continue to benefit them when they return to their mainstream school and community.

Does Family School work?

This approach has a strong track record. Eight of every ten children who experience it will stay in or return to mainstream school.

The remaining two will find their way to a better learning environment than they previously experienced.



What parents say

“When my son first started secondary school he found it very challenging to complete a whole week at school. Since being at the family school he hasn’t missed a single day. All the staff are so supportive and understanding, which has helped Omar communicate and manage his own anxiety.”

Nazma

“As time has gone by there has been massive improvement in each child’s behaviour both with adults and with their peers. The children have been coached into a routine. The school has grown and the kids have grown with it. My daughter has improved academically and mentally.”

Vicky

“After attending with my son on a regular basis I can see that the school is really helping me and him. I feel that there is a real improvement in his academic achievement and relationships with his peers.”

Marsella

“As the weeks progressed I found just being here and my son knowing that I’m here is support enough and I have seen some improvement in him knowing that I’m not on my own and talking with the other parents here a great deal.”

Wayne

“Soon after our arrival at the family school my fears and suspicions were dispelled. I can see that my son’s behaviour and performance is improving every day and how my commitment to be full time at school has been critical to his improvement.”

Helen

“I have noticed a big difference in my daughter – she actually wants to come to school now. And now she is even looking forward to going on to mainstream school.”

Name?

The role of parents

Parents attend school both to support their own children and to be part of the community which is so important to help all the children make lasting changes. We asked a group of parents what they thought each of them needed to contribute. Here's what they said:

1. Commitment

Your child will get show improvement more quickly if you support the targets and strategies suggested by the school.

2. Participation

Get involved in trying to help each other and the children. Don't be discouraged from saying what you think; what happens in the group stays in the group, and that includes your personal information.

3. Respect and understanding

Show consideration, patience and tolerance for all the families and children at the school. We know that everybody has their own problems and we respect the fact that we are all different. When something is not going right with our children we support each other concerning when and how to step in.

4. Belief in change

We are all living proof that it does work. Talk to parents who are about to graduate who have been in the same boat as you and it can give you the determination you need if things get tough

5. Support for other parents and children

We help children learn good habits from each other in our community of families.

6. Working in partnership with teachers and therapists

By doing this, you will see improvements happen faster at home and at school. They are experts and their ideas are based on evidence and research that can help you.



Practical help and information

Help for parents

The Family School can help parents to get access to parenting improvement courses on-line. We also offer help with writing CVs and preparing for job interviews. There are self-help groups where parents can share their knowledge and expertise.

Transport

The Family School offers help with transport in certain cases. For full details call the telephone number below or send us an email.

A school uniform

There is a Family School dress code: please enquire by phone or email for more information about this.

Reporting sickness

If your child cannot attend school because they are unwell, please call, leaving a message if necessary.

THE FAMILY SCHOOL

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