

# Opportunities for talking to parents

There are many opportunities – formal and informal – for staff, parents and students themselves to talk and listen to each other. These opportunities, and the arrangements they give rise to, can be seen as clustering around four themes:

## Establishing relationships with new pupils and their families

- initial interview and sharing information on entry
- using the home-school agreement as a starting-point for a discussion about working together
- early meeting to review adjustment and initial progress.

## Keeping in touch on a regular basis

- regular 'surgeries' or 'drop in' sessions for parents
- effective use of home-school/homework diaries and organisers
- a named contact for every student and his/her family – so that there is at least one member of staff who knows the pupil well
- frequent, scaled-down assessment and reporting procedures e.g. end of module mini-reports, which include pupil assessments
- use of ICT e.g. voice mail, email, special phone links, school website to improve the flow of information
- a regular newsletter, **by** parents **for** parents.

## Responding to concerns, whether they are initiated by the school or by parents, carers and families

- training and clear procedures for responding to parents' letters, phone calls and impromptu visits; and for dealing with their anxiety, anger and frustration, when necessary
- ensuring the best possible conditions for two way listening (including use of advocacy and mediation), basing discussions on as much information and evidence as possible
- collating comments from parents and considering them regularly in senior management or governors' meetings.

## As students get older

- practical arrangements that reflect both the changing patterns of curriculum and organisation in Key Stage 4 e.g. self-directed study, work experience etc, and a growing need to encourage and acknowledge the importance of young people becoming more and more responsible for their own learning and behaviour
- three-way discussion and activity e.g. assessment and reporting, reviewing student progress
- separate consultation of students and their parents on issues of shared concerns e.g. homework, drugs education, anti-bullying policies.