

The importance of teacher pupil connection

WHY ARE TEACHER PUPIL RELATIONSHIPS IMPORTANT

As you are aware, a teachers role is not just about teaching. It is not an exaggeration that a teacher can change a pupils life. The link below shows the story of Ian Wright (Footballer) and the difference his teacher made to his life. As a teacher you maybe the only protective factor in a young person life, therefore it is vital during this time of separation that pupils feel there is still a connection.



[Ian Wright PE Teacher Video Clip](#)

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT NOW

As time is progressing and children are away from the school environment for longer periods of time. It will be more important than ever for you to keep connecting with pupils. Not only as a protective factor for pupils wellbeing, but also in aid to support pupils when they are expected to return to school. We are anticipating that some pupils will experience much psychological distress when trying to integrate back to school. We foresee that those pupils who feel connected and supported during this time may find returning to school easier.



HOW CAN I CONNECT WITH MY PUPILS

Some children may find it very strange to be called by one of the teaching staff. This could be because:

- They don't like or feel comfortable talking on the phone.
- They associate school and school staff with something negative.
- They don't feel comfortable talking about private things to anyone.



Are there other ways in which you can connect?

What about a letter, direct message, video call or indirectly through a parent/carer?

We appreciate that every school is trying to stay connected with their pupils in different ways, therefore please follow your school or local authorities guidelines.



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Preparing to connect with pupils

WHOS THE BEST PERSON TO SPEAK WITH THE PUPIL?

Before deciding on who should ring which pupil, it might be worth considering who has the best relationship with them. Generally the better the relationship the caller has with the pupil, the more supportive and effective the conversation is likely to be.

This does not mean it would be detrimental for staff members to ring pupils they don't know very well, what this does mean is that those staff members may need to work a bit harder to engaged the pupil.

It always easier for us to talk to people we have an established relationship with.



DO I NEED TO CONNECT WITH A PARENT/CARER FIRST?

Again, please follow your school or Local Authorities guidelines.

For pupils not to be too worried, it would be helpful to prepare the parents/carers and the pupil in advance. This might be done through the usual way of sending out information from the school and there might need to be a request for the parents to remind their child that you will be ringing and why you are ringing.

You may also find that your pupil may not want to speak to you over the phone, therefore it is important to maintain some connection even if it is via parents/carers.



WHAT TO SAY TO PARENTS/CARERS

Parents/carers may have a lot more queries than your pupils. Remember we are all experiencing a significant amount of change and uncertainty, therefore it may be helpful to use acceptance and empathy e.g.

'I completely understand its so hard to home school as well as work from home'

It maybe helpful to have a list of appropriate contact numbers for parents/carers.

This might simply be a matter of sharing generic helplines and local links.



Please remember when connecting with others to look after yourself and be kind to yourself. We are all experiencing this unprecedented time in many different ways.



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Tips on how to engage a pupil on the phone



HOME SCHOOLING

Checking in on home schooling maybe triggering for pupils and parents/carers. Try using a PACE based conversation:

Playfulness - *Oh yeah! I bet its bought back some school flashbacks for you.*

Acceptance - *It's ok not to have done it all*

Curiosity - *I wonder how you've been getting on with the activities*

Empathy - *I completely understand its so hard, we want to support you as much as we can.*



CONNECT BEFORE CORRECT

Try to connect with the person on the phone before trying to offer advice and guidance regarding home working. Connection is key and will hopefully prevent any feelings of shame.

"I know you might not have expected a call from me as we don't usually talk together on the phone. Don't worry I am not calling you because there is anything wrong or anything to be worried about, I just wanted to hear how you are doing"



INTERESTS

Are you getting out much? Are you getting fresh air?

Whats the best/worst thing about staying at home?

Have you been able to talk to your friends? How? Often? Everyone okay?

In what ways have you been keeping busy?



FEASIBILITY

Many families may not have the feasibility to engage in home schooling as they don't have the equipment laptop, printer, internet access.

Some families may also be struggling to balance working from home, child care and education.

Could your school loan a laptop?
Support the pupils needs in another way?

ITS THE WAY YOU SAY IT

It is more difficult to connect on the phone as body language is unavailable. However you may be able to interpret some feelings via your pupils voice and the way they say things.

If you feel your pupil is uncomfortable on the phone you could use a grounding activity e.g. notice five things in the room or outside (or use the 5 senses).



TIMING

Understandably timing of phone calls are important to consider, given that families routines may be more relaxed or that parents/carers may be working from home, there may not be an ideal time to ring. But consideration could be given to ringing first thing in the morning, especially for adolescents, or late in the day when routines maybe more relaxed.



My pupil doesn't want to speak to me

I'M WORRIED - THEY WONT SPEAK TO ME

We know that phone calls are not children's and young people's main mode of communicating, most find text conversations more comfortable, so don't be too concerned if your pupil seems unfamiliar or uncomfortable during your call.

Some children might also categorically refuse to talk, there might be lots of reasons for this. It is important to consider your past knowledge of your pupil and their family. If there were concerns regarding the family before please keep trying to connect with them and follow your school and local authorities guidelines if you have any ongoing concerns.

GIVE IT TIME

It may take a few attempts for our pupil to feel comfortable to talk on the phone.

It is important to be sensitive to your pupil's need to build up trust during phone calls over a period of time and to expect a limited amount of feedback in the beginning. This may be a good opportunity to get to know your pupil better, it maybe worth trying to connect with them at different times of the day, asking different questions each time.

DOCUMENTATION

It's really important to keep track of whether you have connected with a family or not.

Please follow your school or Local Authorities guidelines in recording conversations with your pupils and their families. It may be worth keeping a list or making a record of who you have spoken to and and noting down some details of the conversation.

Not only can this be used as a helpful aide-memoire, it is also good practice.

Remember... Don't take it personally if they don't want to speak to you.

This is supposed to be a hand reached out to children they can accept if they want/are able to. Some children might not want to take that hand, but the fact they know it is there might be helpful in itself.



A pupils disclosed on the phone

FOLLOW LOCAL PROCEDURES

Unfortunately you may be in a position in which your pupil or a family member tells you something risky or harmful.

If this is the case please keep calm and remember your safeguarding training. You also have your schools and Local Authorities policies and procedures to follow so please remember you have the skills to respond appropriately. Please see the link below for the Gwent Safeguarding Website.

[Gwent Safeguarding Link](#)



YOU ARE NOT ON YOUR OWN

Remember, it is very important to share your concerns.

Have you got a safeguarding lead within your school or a designated person you can speak to?

It is vitally important you gain the appropriate support and follow local procedures. Please contact your local connections in Social Care and Health if needed. No one should hold risk on their own, its everybody's business.



SELF CARE

We are all experiencing a time of great uncertainty. Now more than ever is the time to try practice self care. Here are five things we can do to boost our wellbeing:



Take Notice: Take time for yourself, notice things around you.

Connect: Make time to connect with family and friends.

Be Active: Use your one physical activity a day to go for a walk.

Keep Learning: Learn something new.

Give: Acts of kindness, helping others or volunteering.



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