

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Structured Conversations

Aims of the session:

- To understand the purpose and nature of the Structured Conversation. (What it is)
- To understand the basic skills of carrying out a structured conversation. (How to do it)
- To consider coaching style questions

Why use structured conversations?

- To improve the achievement and progress of children and young people with SEND.
- To improve the engagement of parents of children and young people with SEND with their school.
- To improve the wider outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Why the need for a structured conversation?

- Harris & Goodall “Parents: Do They Matter?” (2007) found parental engagement is critical to the child’s achievement.
- Brian Lamb’s Inquiry (2009) reported:
“What has struck us quite forcibly is that it seems no one has had a discussion with parents about the outcomes they aspire to for their child.”

The Structured Conversation

Why? Impact?

- Outcomes of the initial structured conversations have shown improvements in provision and in ensuring aspirational targets are set.
- Overwhelming evidence already from schools prioritising the structured conversations of significant impact on improving the engagement of parents with the education of their children

Pupils are reporting:

- they talk to their parents more about what they are learning at school;
- their parents are helping them with their learning at home;
- they feel more confident to contribute in lessons;
- they are happier in school because they are becoming successful in areas where they have previously struggled.

Parents are reporting:

- they value the experience of the structured conversation and feel they are being listened to;
- they feel that this is the best opportunity they have had to really talk to the school about their child;
- they are sharing ideas with the teacher about the most effective ways of supporting their child.

Teachers are reporting:

- Teachers are having a more open dialogue with parents;
- they are gaining more information than ever before about their pupils;
- they are starting to use the increased knowledge and information they have about their pupils to improve provision to meet their needs more effectively

Aims of the structured conversation

The structured conversation is intended to facilitate a relationship that develops around the shared purpose of improving the educational achievement of young people with SEND; this will allow the free exchange of information and views; the evolution of supportive teaching and learning strategies.

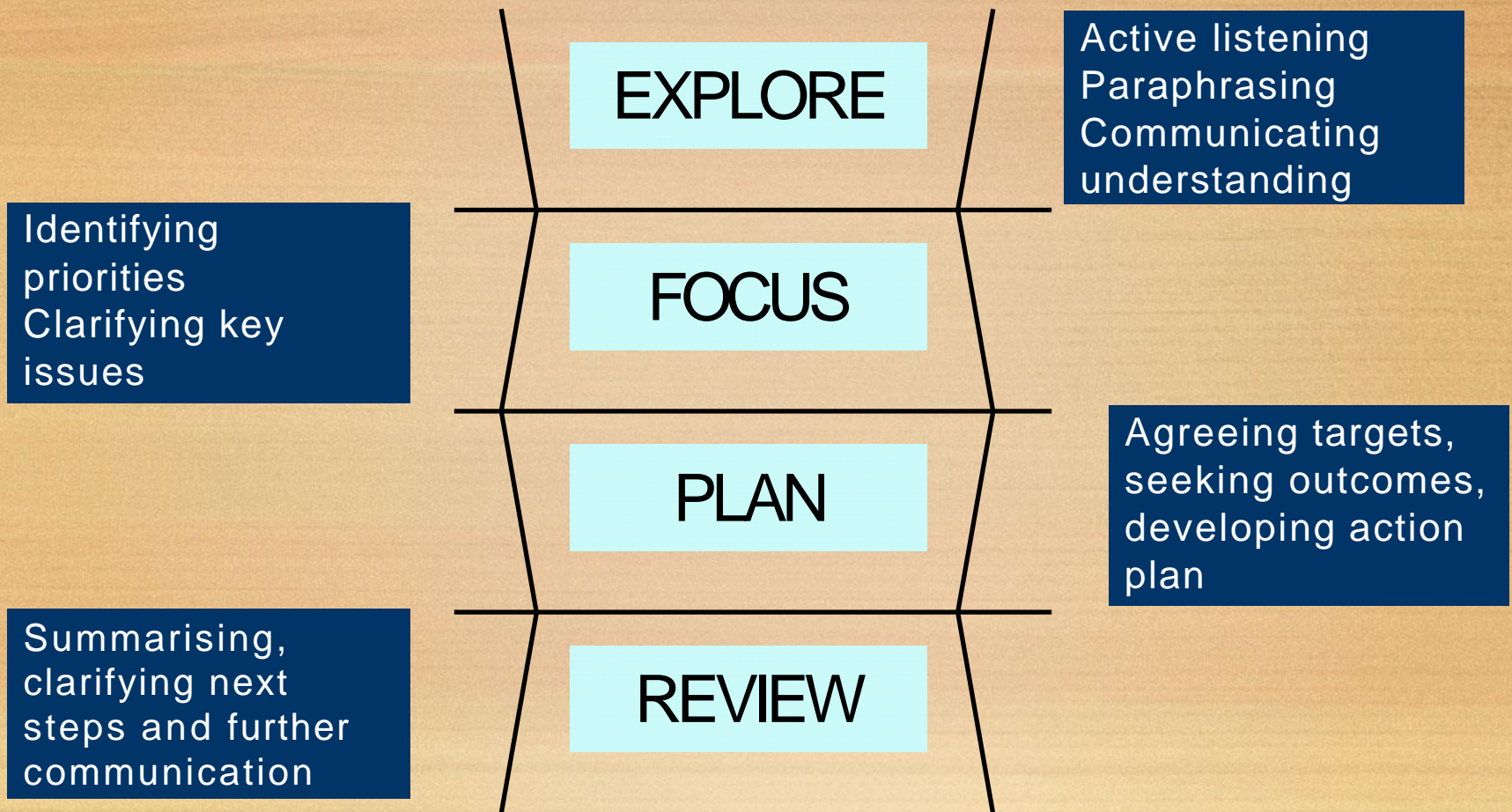
Benefits of the structured conversation

- Establishes an effective relationship.
- Parents can express their aspirations.
- Teacher and parent can share concerns.
- They can set clear targets and decide on how to achieve them.
- Clarifies responsibilities of all parties.

Process for the Structured Conversation

- Prior to meeting key teacher gathers information on progress and gaps in learning.
- Key teacher gathers the pupil's views,
- The key teacher holds the initial structured conversation with the parent as early as possible in Autumn term
- Through the communications arrangements agreed, the teacher confirms the targets, actions and support with the parent and pupil.

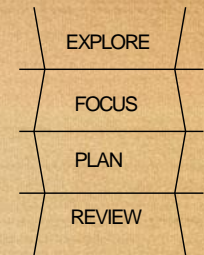
Framework for the structured conversation



The Structured Conversation

Stage 1 **Exploring** stage: attending

- Attending is about giving the right non-verbal messages, using open body language and maintaining good eye contact.
- It's also about asking the right kinds of questions with a tentative tone, questions around the parent's aspirations, the child's needs, what's been tried before, what barriers there are to achievement.

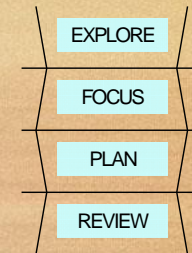


Exploring stage: paraphrasing

- A paraphrase is an attempt to restate in a fresh way the main part of what someone has said without adding any of your own ideas, feelings, interpretations etc. The tone is tentative and slightly questioning.
- It's powerful because it is the main way in which empathy is communicated and because it clears up miscommunications.

Exploring stage: paraphrasing exercise

- In triads, A talks about the topic of a book/film or series that you are watching. B attends and listens.
- During this period, B should attempt to paraphrase three or four times, maintaining a conversational rhythm as far as possible, avoiding long silences or long periods in which the speaker speaks uninterruptedly.
- C feeds back on what was effective in the paraphrase and non-verbal communication.



The Structured Conversation

Stage 2: Focusing

Focusing stage: summarising

- Summaries draw themes and points together and give some `shape' to an interview.
- They are most useful when a conversation is becoming repetitive, meandering or confused.
- A variation called Choice Point is useful when a parent raises several topics for discussion. The teacher summarises and then adds something like 'Which would you like to take first?'

Focusing stage: summarising exercise

- A is asked to talk about an aspect of his/her life that they wish they could change.
- B listens carefully, attending and paraphrasing at regular intervals. After around 5 minutes, B should summarise what has been said, trying to identify clearly each issue that A has introduced.
- A continues to speak. C gives feedback to B, carefully noting the impact of paraphrase, summary and choice point.

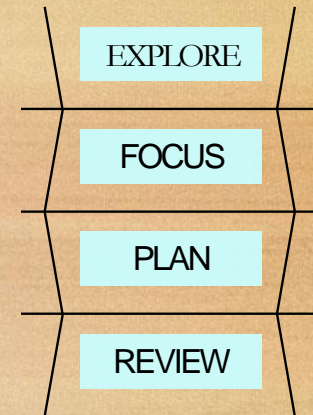
Focusing stage: questioning

Questions can destroy or illuminate the tone of a conversation. Helpful questions are those which help a parent clarify or see a new possibility.

- What do questions do? What is the value of questions?
- What are their limitations?

The Structured Conversation

Stage 3: Planning



Planning stage: setting goals

Clear goals need to be established taking into account:

- What came out of the parent's aspirations?
- The teacher's knowledge of the child.

Commitment needs to be established:

- Benefits of achieving the goal.
- How much do we want this?

Planning stage: giving information

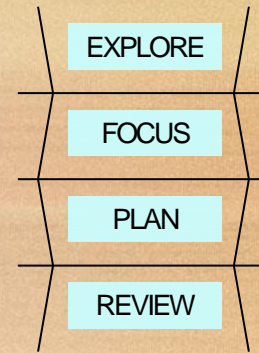
- Establishing goals and targets may involve giving parents information to increase understanding. e.g. pupils level of progress in literacy / maths
- Giving information is different from giving advice. It should help parents make a decision not suggest what the decision should.
- Complex information is more likely to be remembered if you: use simple words and short sentences, categorise (e.g. there are three points here), avoid jargon, check understanding.

Planning stage: giving information example

“Hayley is actually making good progress; and is very close to achieving the two steps you are speaking of. If we can agree what needs to be done to support her to achieve just a little more, she can make the two steps.”

Planning stage: the GROW Model

- **Goal:** What do you want achieve?
- **Reality:** What's happening now?
- **Options:** What could you do?
- **Way Forward:** What will you do?



The Structured Conversation

Stage 4: Reviewing

Review stage: summarising

- It is important that the Review stage includes a **written** record of what has been discussed/agreed.
- Summary of areas discussed, important issues, goals and plans put in place.
- Summary should be concise, in writing, comprehensible to parent and colleagues (limited jargon).
- Invite parents to check their understanding.
- Sets clear line of future communication, for example: regular meetings, a person the parent can contact, the date of the next structured conversation.

Example structured conversation

Look at example of structured conversation dialogue.

Look at how each of these sections: Explore, Focus, plan and review work in reality.

See if you can spot some examples of paraphrasing and summarising.

Also look at the sorts of questions used.

After looking through the dialogue:

- How do the coaching questions used encourage parental engagement?
- Could you see the structure?
- What does the meeting achieve?

Recording the conversation

- Look at the example record sheet for the meeting together.
- Give out support resources: example of the conversation, example recording sheet, blank recording sheets, coaching question ideas.