

CSPD Guidelines on the role of the parent support person attending school and CSPD meetings



Catholic Schools
Parramatta Diocese

Our commitment to working in partnership

Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD) acknowledges that parents and carers are the first educators of their children. CSPD and its schools value respectful partnerships with families as an essential part of supporting each child's learning, wellbeing and faith journey.

This guide explains CSPD's expectations when a parent, carer or community member wishes to bring a support person to a meeting held at a CSPD school or central office. It is intended to assist parents and carers, support persons, school leaders, CSPD Heads and CSPD Managers.

The role of a support person

A parent or carer may ask an adult aged 18 years or over to attend a meeting as their support person.

The support person's primary role is to provide emotional and practical support. This may include:

- helping the parent or carer prepare for the meeting;
- taking notes;
- assisting the parent or carer to understand the matters discussed;
- requesting a short break when needed; and
- helping the parent or carer reflect on the discussion after the meeting.

The support person is not ordinarily expected to speak on behalf of the parent or carer, answer questions directed to parents, advocate a separate position or disrupt the orderly conduct of the meeting. Communication will generally be directed to the parent or carer.

A support person may assist with clarification where appropriate, with the agreement of the person chairing the meeting.

Interpreters and communication assistance

Where a parent or carer requires an interpreter or other communication assistance, they should advise the school or CSPD contact before the meeting wherever possible. This will allow appropriate arrangements to be discussed and confirmed.

An interpreter performs a different role from a support person and may be arranged separately where required.

Privacy and confidentiality

Meetings may involve confidential or sensitive information about a student, family member, staff member or another person.

Parents and carers should carefully consider this before inviting a partner, relative, friend or other person to attend. Information discussed during the meeting may include matters of which the support person was not previously aware.

CSPD may also need to limit the disclosure of information where this is required to protect another person's privacy, safety or procedural fairness.

The support person will be expected to respect the privacy and confidentiality of the matters discussed.





Advocates

Meetings are designed to allow the facilitation of a collaborative discussion about concerns either or both parties may have. CSPD does not recognise a professional advocate as someone who will facilitate such a discussion and therefore, requests to allow the attendance of a professional advocate will not be considered as families are attending in good faith.

Where a parent or carer wishes to bring a professional advocate, they should advise the Principal or relevant CSPD representative before the meeting. CSPD will then review whether a meeting may proceed.

CSPD may seek advice or arrange for an appropriate representative to attend before proceeding.

Before the meeting

Before attending a meeting, parents, carers and support persons are encouraged to review CSPD's Family and School Partnership Principles.

Parents and carers should provide the following information before the meeting wherever possible:

- the support person's name;
- their relationship to the parent or carer;
- whether an interpreter or other communication assistance is required; and
- whether the proposed attendee is acting in a professional advocacy

During the meeting

All participants are expected to:

- communicate respectfully;
- allow each person an appropriate opportunity to speak;
- follow reasonable directions from the person chairing the meeting;
- remain focused on the purpose of the meeting;
- respect privacy and confidentiality; and
- work constructively towards appropriate actions or next steps.

Where behaviour becomes unreasonable, aggressive, threatening or otherwise unacceptable, the person chairing the meeting may pause or end the meeting. Alternative arrangements for continuing the matter may then be determined.

Recording meetings and telephone calls

CSPD does not permit a meeting or telephone call to be electronically recorded unless the proposed recording has been disclosed in advance and all participants have expressly agreed.

Participants may take written notes. CSPD does not share minutes, notes or transcripts of meetings; however CSPD may provide a written summary of the meeting, including agreed actions and next steps.

Escalation and additional support

CSPD seeks to resolve concerns at the most appropriate local level wherever possible.

Where a matter cannot be resolved at the school level, the parent or carer will be advised of the appropriate escalation pathway. Relevant CSPD subject matter experts or senior officers may be consulted or involved, depending on the nature of the matter.