

## Parenting Contracts - Information for Parents

### ***What is a parenting contract?***

A parenting contract is an agreement between a parent/carer and the school. You may be offered a parenting contract if your child has attendance or behaviour issues. Parenting contracts are NOT a punishment. They are a way for you and the school to work together to help improve your child's behaviour or attendance and for you to get practical support. This may be provided directly by someone from the school or by another partner organisation.

### ***Who can be offered a parenting contract?***

Parenting contracts can be offered to any parent or step parent, or carer that has some day to day care of a child or young person, whether they live with the child or not. The school will usually try to contact all of the child's parents or carers to discuss what each of them can do to help improve their child's attendance or behaviour and the types of support they might need. Depending on the circumstances, the parents/carers may then enter into a joint parenting contract or separate parenting contracts.

### ***What does it involve?***

Parenting contracts are intended to give you support and to help you help your child to get the most out of school. They are also intended to encourage a positive working relationship between the School/Academy and parents/carers so that we can all work together to tackle absence or behaviour matters and try to resolve problems. Under the contract, you will be expected to agree to do certain things, for example, ensuring that your child arrives at school punctually every day by accompanying them to school/making arrangements for them to be accompanied, or signing a weekly behaviour report and discussing any problems raised with your child.

### ***Do I have to enter into a parenting contract if it is offered to me?***

No – parenting contracts are a voluntary arrangement between the school and the parent. You cannot be forced to enter into a contract. However, they do provide you with a chance to get support and to help your child get the most out of their education. If you decide not to enter into a contract, you will need to try to find other ways of improving your child's behaviour or attendance and it may be worth discussing with the school how you intend to do this. If there is no improvement, consideration will have to be given by the school as to what further action maybe required. This could include applying for a court order directing you attend parenting classes to support you in managing your child's behaviour or attendance, or, as a last resort considering whether to report the matter to the Local Authority should prosecution considerations be required.

***My child has low attendance/ has been excluded and the school has offered me a parenting contract meeting – what happens now?***

The school will invite you to a meeting to discuss the parenting contract. Your child may also be invited to attend depending on their age and understanding.

It is really important that you prioritise attending the meeting.

DO NOT WORRY. Parenting contracts are not a punishment and being offered a contract is not a bad reflection on parents in any way. The meeting is for you and the school to discuss your child's attendance or behaviour, the reasons behind it and ways in which it might be improved. You can also use it to discuss more generally any difficulties which you/your family are having and types of support that may be helpful to you. Before you attend the meeting, it is important to have a think about what you would like to get out of it. In particular:

- What do you think about your child's absence/behaviour and are there any reasons behind it which it would be helpful to discuss at the meeting?
- Are there any practical things which would help you to improve your child's attendance or behaviour e.g. breakfast club/regular phone calls with your child's form teacher or identified peer support for your child etc?
- Are you experiencing any particular difficulties at the moment and, if so, might the school need to be aware of these to be able to help or let you know where you can get help – e.g., benefits advice, parent groups, counselling, etc?
- What might you realistically be able to prioritise doing to improve your child's behaviour/attendance e.g., accompany them to the school gate every day, sign a daily behaviour report, attend parenting classes, etc?

If you are anxious about attending the meeting, ask if you can bring a friend or family member along for moral support. They won't be able to speak for you, but having someone there can often help.