

Tips to get the most out of Parents' Evenings

If this is the first Parents' Evening you are attending, you may be unsure of what to ask. This is an ideal opportunity for you to get a detailed report on your child's progress and behaviour in school. Please try to arrange for someone to look after your child, if you must take your child with you, make them wait in an area where they cannot overhear your discussion. You will get more out of the meeting if you prepare beforehand.

What should I do to prepare for Parents' Evening?

- Decide who is going. Ideally both parents should attend, if this is not possible ask a friend or relative to come with you. Afterwards you can discuss what was said.
- Discuss with your child to find out how things are going at school; which subjects are they happiest with and are there any areas of concern. Do they behave well when at school both in the classroom and out in the playground?
- Look at your child's homework diary and jotters.

Write down your questions

Prepare specific questions to ask during your appointment. Remember time is short so focus on your child. If you have questions about the school in general, call the school office or check the website. By asking the same questions of the teachers, you will have information to compare and be able to identify any potential gaps. If you already know of a specific or potentially major problem or issue with your child, do not leave it until Parents' Evening. Issues requiring greater time and attention should be addressed through longer, specific and private meetings with relevant staff.

Whatever you want to ask, you should. If you don't know what a teacher means, do not feel embarrassed to ask; as a parent you are not expected to have the specialist knowledge of every subject teacher. Don't be afraid to ask for a subsequent meeting if you feel you haven't been able to deal with all your questions in the allotted time, or if you have further questions which arise later.

Listen to the teacher

Parents' Evening is your chance to get to know your child's teacher. Having a friendly relationship makes it easier if other concerns need to be addressed later in the year. Listen to what the teacher has to say before you ask your questions.

Take notes

Take notes and ask staff for specific guidance that you can feed back to your child later. It is a good idea to go over what has been said with your relative/friend.

Don't get defensive/abusive

It is perfectly normal to feel a little nervous, especially if this is your first Parents' Evening. Remember the teachers may be feeling nervous too. The teacher will begin the meeting with positive comments about your child before telling you about areas where your child can improve. Your child may need extra help with reading, writing, spelling or maths. The teacher is not blaming you or your child only trying to identify ways to help your child get the most out of his/her education. Be prepared for constructive criticism. Hearing negative comments about your child can be difficult and upsetting. It may be hard to accept but try to refrain from getting defensive or abusive towards the teacher.

Tell the teacher about changes at home

If there's been upheaval in your house, let your child's teacher know. Changes such as a new baby, a divorce or a death can affect your child's behaviour and attitude towards school. Your right to privacy will be respected by all members of staff.

Plan what to do next

The teacher may suggest how you can follow up any discussions you have had, especially if your child needs extra help. Don't be afraid to ask if you are unsure of what to do next.

Tell your child how it went

Your child will be interested to know what the teacher said. Firstly pass on any praise and positive comments before discussing areas of concern. If your child had a specific question, tell him/her what the teacher said. Explain what you and the teacher decided to do. This shows that you listened to your child and you take their concerns seriously.



The Top 10 questions to ask at Parents' Evenings

1. What is my child's attitude towards learning?
2. What are my child's strengths and weaknesses?
3. Is there anywhere you think my child could improve?
4. How can I help my child at home?
5. Does my child contribute in class?
6. What does my child enjoy doing in school?
7. Is my child above or below the expected level?
8. Is my child fitting in socially?
9. How much time should my child spend on homework?
10. Is there anything you would like to know about what my child is like at home?

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