

A Parent Guide to Parents' Evening

What are parents' evenings?

Parents' evenings are meetings held between your child's teacher and yourself to discuss your child's attainment and progress. They're a great chance for you to meet the teacher and build a positive, supportive relationship, as well as finding out what your child has been doing in school and how they are getting on. You might also like to talk to the teacher about anything you think is important for them to know, such as any friendship issues or any information about their home life.



How often are they held?

Schools are obliged to hold one parents' evening each year. However, most schools offer at least two opportunities to meet and discuss your child. Usually, a school will hold one in the autumn term, which is a chance for you to meet their new teacher and discuss how your child is settling in. The spring term parents' evening tends to discuss attainment and progress, going into more detail about your child's academic achievement, their behaviour, their relationships with friends and targets to work on.

Some schools offer another chance for parents to meet the teacher in the summer term; this may be after reports have been sent out and is an opportunity for parents to discuss the report and find out how they have progressed since the last meeting. If your child is on the SEND register, you will be invited to discuss their targets at a separate meeting.

What if I can't go?

Schools will usually send out information about parents' evenings well in advance and you'll be given a couple (or more) dates to choose from, as well as some time slots to choose from. Sometimes this is done through a letter or it might be organised online. Meeting times will then be finalised and you'll be informed of your day and time. Try to be as flexible as possible with times but don't worry if you can't go - just let the teacher know and they'll be happy to organise another time to meet.

Since the pandemic, many schools have opted to hold parents' evenings online, where you log into a secure online space for a video meeting with the teacher. This has proved to be very successful as it means that you don't have to worry about childcare, although it does mean that you don't get to see your child's work in their books.

If you and your child's other parent do not live together, the school will offer you separate appointments so that you can both be involved.

What might the teacher talk about?

The teacher will talk about what your child has been doing in school and how they are achieving in various areas of the curriculum. They might inform you of any test results or talk about upcoming tests (such as SATs or the phonics screening check) and what you could do to prepare at home. They will talk about your child's strengths and any things they need to work on. If there are other concerns, your teacher will bring those up too. They might talk briefly about your child's behaviour and friendship groups.

Remember that appointments are very short - between five and ten minutes - so if there's anything you need to ask or any issues you'd like to discuss, make sure you do so earlier rather than later.

Working above the Expected Standard

This means that your child has met the age-related standard for a child in this stage of their education in a particular subject or topic and they are working at greater depth. They are achieving more than the expectations of a child of their age and stage.

The teacher might use phrases to describe your child's attainment:

Working below the Expected Standard

This means that your child has not yet met the age-related standard for a child in this stage of their education in a particular subject or topic.

Working at the Expected Standard

This means that your child has met the age-related standard for a child in this stage of their education in a particular subject or topic.

Does my child participate in class discussions?

Your child might have their hand up all the time or they might never put their hand up to answer questions. Either one is fine, but your child's teacher might explain some ways they are encouraging your child to take part - for example, by asking children to tell their partners their answers first or by directing questions that they know your child will be able to answer.

What does my child need help with?

The teacher might talk about strategies that they are using to support your child in school for something they find difficult; they'll also suggest strategies that you can use to help at home. It may be something academic or it may be a social issue, for example turn-taking, which can be practised in both the home and school setting.

Don't.....

✗ ...compare your child with others. The teacher will be focused on your child's progress and behaviour and they won't be able to say whether your child is doing better than someone else.

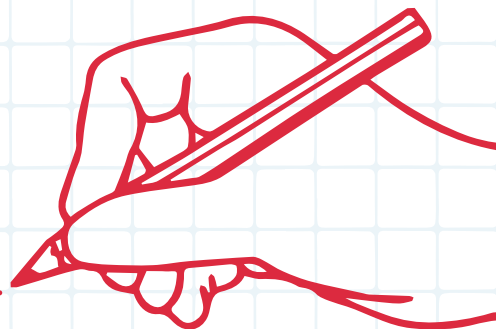
✗ ...talk about other children, apart from maybe mentioning who your child talks about at home or any friendship concerns you have.

✗ ...expect the teacher to spend more time with you than your appointment time. If you have more things to ask, make a separate appointment.

✗ ...be late. Parents' evenings are extremely busy for teachers and it's hard to juggle thirty different families' needs without getting behind on time. Try your hardest to be prompt starting and finishing.

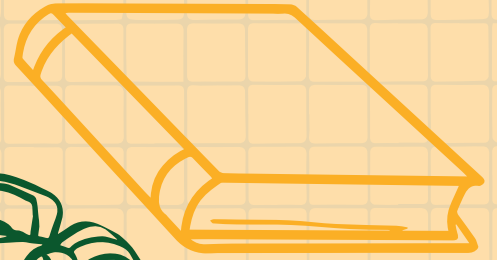
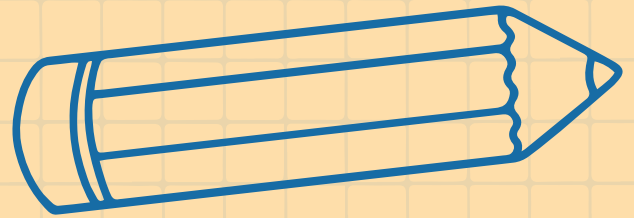
✗ ...let your emotions get the better of you. Teachers will tell you positives, but it is also their job to tell the truth about any concerns they have. If you are frustrated about something and the teacher hasn't been able to resolve it, rather than becoming angry, ask the teacher what can be done next. This might include involving another member of staff and a separate appointment.

✗ ...go home feeling frustrated. It's easy to get bogged down by one negative comment and forget about all the positives. Remember to celebrate all the lovely things that were said about your child and don't let that one issue overwhelm everything else.



Do

- ✓ ...ask the teacher to explain something if you're not sure what it means - they'll be happy to do this.
- ✓ ...ask to make a separate appointment if you require one to talk in more detail about any concerns you have.
- ✓ ...tell the teacher if there's anything happening at home that you think may be relevant. It might be the illness of a loved relative or pet, a change in attitude that you've noticed or a change in family circumstances.
- ✓ ...stay on track. Try not to go off the subject of your child. That way, you'll get the best from the appointment. Any general issues, such as dinner money or trip forms, can be dealt with at the school office.
- ✓ ...let the school know if you can't make the appointment. Life is busy and sometimes days don't go quite to plan, so if you can't make it, a courtesy call is appreciated. You'll be able to rearrange a more suitable time.
- ✓ ...thank the teacher for their time.



What should I do after the meeting?

Children generally want to know what their teacher has said about them, so give them brief feedback. Focus on the positives so that they can feel good about themselves and about going to school. Talk to them constructively about any issues in terms of discussing how you're going to support them. This might be in terms of focusing on a certain area (such as reading at home or handwriting) or it might be strategies for tackling behaviour issues.

Don't let your child hear you say anything negative about the teacher or school, as this will influence them. If they see that you have less respect for the teacher, then they'll think it's okay if they do too. Instead, find the time to have another chat with the teacher to iron out any problems and find a way to work together.