

Top Tips

10 ways to get the most out of Parents' evening

1. **Talk to your child beforehand.** Ask them what they feel they are doing well at and what they most enjoy at school. Is there anything they would like you to ask the teacher? Are there any pieces of work they would particularly like you to see? This helps you to build a picture of how your child feels they are doing and can be really helpful to share with the teacher, who may have a different perspective.
2. **Go with two or three points in mind.** It can help to prepare and have a few things to ask about, although you may well find these are addressed before you get a chance to ask. Be aware of the areas your child needed to work on last time (or from their last report) and try to find out how they are doing with those.
3. **Be prepared to wait!** Unfortunately it is not unusual for Parents' evenings to run a little behind, particularly if you are near the end of the evening - so allow plenty of time. Please be patient - you may have had a long day, but so has the teacher!
4. **Arrive in time to look at any work** which may be available. Most schools put out your child's books to be viewed at Parents' evening. Arriving a little before your appointment time should mean you can look at these whilst you wait and be in better position to discuss their work during the appointment.
5. **Give the teacher an insight into what your child is like at home.** Many children show different characteristics at home and in school. The teacher may find it useful to know that the quiet child who seems too shy to put their hand up, can be very vocal at home.
6. **Try to be positive.** Even if you have issues or questions to raise, try not to begin a Parents' evening on the offensive. It can get the appointment off to a bad start and be counterproductive in reaching a solution. Bear in mind that a teacher will have appointments after yours: it is not fair on other parents or the teacher to take up more than your allotted time or leave a teacher feeling attacked or vulnerable. If you have a particular issue, it would be better to make another appointment, perhaps with a more senior member of staff. Remember teachers will want your child to be happy in their class and make as much progress as they can, so try and work with them towards achieving this.
7. **Treat siblings as individuals and expect teachers to do the same.** Try to avoid comparing the child you are discussing with their siblings, whom the teacher may have already taught. Also, avoid warning the teacher about the siblings they have yet to teach. There are many teachers who have heard a parent say 'Oh just you wait until you teach his little brother...be warned!'. It's probably best to let them find out for themselves and is certainly fairer to all your children.
8. **Enjoy any positive comments the teacher makes, but don't come out boasting to other parents about how clever your child is.** Generally most parents aren't that interested in how well other people's children are doing, so some things are best left shared at home and not in the playground.
9. **Respect confidentiality.** Don't expect the teacher to discuss any other children in the class with you. Obviously if there is an issue with another child you can mention it, but otherwise it is not fair to ask the teacher questions like 'So who else is in my child's group for maths?'
10. **Be realistic about what your child is capable of achieving.** By all means have high aspirations but remember there are always areas for your child to develop.