Parents’ Evening Survival Guide

Ensuring the whole-school are getting the most out of their evening

Whether you’re a teacher, student or parent - Parents’ Evening is an important event in the school calendar. It’s an opportunity for parents to sit down and have meaningful conversations about their child’s academic progression and students can raise concerns they may have with both their parents and teachers. We’ve created our Parents’ Evening Survival Guide to ensure each party is prepared for the evening and know what to expect.

Teachers

Parents’ Evening comes around once or twice a year and it’s important for you to have the opportunity to sit down with each of your students’ parents and speak to them about how their child is getting on in your class. But with an exceptionally busy evening, crammed full of grades and parents, we’re here to make sure that you’re ready to tackle every situation by following our guide to a successful Parents’ Evening.

Preparation

- Send home a report or summary prior to the session.
- Make sure that parents arrive fully informed and equipped, meaning that you can focus on the matters at hand, rather than having to fit in an overview of the whole year within your short session.
- Highlight students’ strengths, areas that have improved over the course of the term, and key areas for development. Make sure you give clear action points for the students to take.
- Print off your notes for each student so that you can stay on topic during the session and to ensure that you have the time to talk through each point.
- Have on hand the contact details for the best members of staff in school to contact in case the conversations overrun.
- Print out any relevant school policy details so that you can distribute these should they arise, and so you have the facts with you to address any difficult conversations.

On the day

- Set expectations.
- Stand to greet the parent, smile warmly and shake their hand. You are there to work in conjunction to best help their child, but it’s important that you take the lead on the meeting.
- Outline the structure of the meeting so that you are all on the same page from the start. Reiterate that you only have 5/10 minutes, what you will cover (e.g. The student’s strengths and areas for improvements) and let the parent know they will have the chance to voice any concerns that they may have.
- Stick to your fixed plan to cover the most important points, even if parents want to discuss other topics (they’ll always have the chance as this should be a dialogue). Your preparation will cover parents who have and haven’t had the chance to look at the report or summary you sent home prior to the event, and your advice and overview will be invaluable to them.
On What to take:

Remember to take along a copy of your homework policy and the contact details of relevant support staff around the school for the parents to take away. It may be a long night, so be prepared with a bottle of water and a snack too!

Parents

You only have one shot, and a short window of time with each teacher. Follow these tips to ensure that you are equipped with everything you need to get the most out of your Parents’ Evening.

Preparation

• Talk to your child - find out if there’s anything on their minds that they’d like you to bring up on their behalf, or to have your support with on the evening itself.
• Enquire about their teachers and the subject in advance to avoid any hidden surprises and difficult conversations on the night.
• Discuss your perception of their strengths and potential areas for development so that you can better help them to digest their given feedback afterwards.

Make use of school and homework reports

• Don’t go in blind. Read all the school reports so you can ask informed questions.
• If the school sends home a report or summary, try to gauge how your child is doing subject by subject, and look at any trends of progression.

Bring notes to your session

If you have any areas of concern, make concise notes that you can bring up on the day to avoid missing an important point.

On the day

• Use your time wisely.
• Teachers are under a lot of pressure to stick to schedules, so make sure that you arrive promptly and stick to your allocated time slots. When you have the chance, address the most pressing matters first and if needed, schedule in time for a further discussion at a later date.
• If your teachers give you actions points but you feel unsure of where to begin, take advantage of this time and ask them any questions you may have. They’ll be able to clarify the best way to achieve this and help you to move forward.

What to take:

Remember to bring along a notepad and pen, as well as a note of any key questions that you would like to ask.
Students

If you will be attending Parents’ Evening this year, follow these tips to get the most out of the evening. Even if you’re just listening in, make sure you have prepped your parents well in advance.

Preparation

• Have an overview of your progress.
• If you are unsure of your grades or the level that you’re currently working at, ask to see a summary of your performance to date. It’s good to be on the same page as your teachers so that you can take on board their feedback and advice and put it into practice.
• Talk to your parents about how you feel you are doing, and about any worries or concerns that you have. You might find it hard to bring up your areas of concern yourself, but they can broach the subject for you. Be honest to your parents and teachers
• Are you struggling with any subjects or topics, but have never told anyone? Make sure your teachers know - they will do what they can to help.
• Have you kept anything from your parents, perhaps a grade that disappointed you or a detention for forgetting to hand in some work? It’s best to tell them now, rather than have the teacher bring it up during the session.

On the day

• Take note of what your teachers say.
• Make sure that you stay alert throughout the evening. You might think that this is an opportunity for your parents to communicate with your teachers, but you will also hear a lot of valuable advice from both parties.
• Don’t feel that you have to speak to every subject teacher, but if there’s something that you want to say in the presence of a parent, make a note of this and have it on hand.
• If your teachers give you actions points but you feel unsure of where to begin, take advantage of this time and ask them any questions you may have. They’ll be able to clarify the best way to achieve this and help you to move forward.

What to take:

Remember to bring along a notepad and pen, as well as a note of any key questions that you would like to ask.