



Help your children to learn

MAKING THE MOST OF PARENTS' EVENINGS

For both primary and secondary parents

department for
education and skills

Resources for
parents by parents

Research shows that your interest and involvement in your child's learning and education is more important than anything else in helping your child fulfil their potential. As parents, you are the people who go with your child on their learning journey, from the day they are born to the time they become an adult.

You, as the parent, carer or guardian know your child best. These leaflets give ideas and suggestions for you to choose from – you will know which ones suit you, your child and the school. All of the ideas in the leaflet have been developed by parents and can be used with, or adapted for, both primary and secondary age children and young people.

There are many sorts of schools in England – the ideas and suggestions made in these leaflets do not necessarily reflect DfES policy or school policy and should be viewed simply as support for parents in helping their children to learn. Your school may not have seen this leaflet before and it may be helpful to tell them that you are going to use it. All schools have a home school agreement and by signing this agreement you will be acknowledging your partnership with the school to help educate your child. Working in partnership with the school will help your child become a successful learner and a rounded person.

Making the Most of Parents' Evenings

This booklet will help you make the most of parents' evenings. It looks at:

- preparing for parents' evenings
- making the most of your time with teachers
- setting targets
- helping your child after parents' evenings.

Many of the ideas in this booklet are useful for parents of children at any stage of school, but the main focus of the booklet is the secondary age range.

Another booklet in this series, *Formal meetings with teachers*, looks at other formal meetings with teachers and how to make the most of them.



Preparing for parents' evenings

The school will invite you to attend parents' evenings at least once a year. This is a very good opportunity to find out how your child is progressing and to meet your child's teachers. Make a note of the date of the parents' evening as soon as you get it, and give it priority when you are planning ahead.

To make the most of the evening, you can prepare a little beforehand without spending lots of time. Here are some ideas.

- If you receive a report before the parents' evening, spend some time with your child going through it, talking about what's good (strengths) and areas for improvement (weaknesses). Look at all areas – not just academic achievement but also behaviour, attendance etc. Encourage your child to suggest ways in which he or she can keep up the good standard or improve if needed. You can then take these ideas to the parents' evening. (There is more on school reports in another booklet in this series, *Getting the most from school reports*.)
- If you don't receive a report, you should still spend some time with your child, talking about strengths and weaknesses, perhaps looking at grades, marks and comments on homework and coursework.
- Make a note of any questions you want to ask the teachers. Include any concerns you have about emotional and social progress, such as how well your child fits in, or anything to do with friendships or bullying.

Making the most of a parents' evening

Going to a parents' evening can take some time and organisation and you need to make the most of the time with teachers you have once you are there. The more you can get out of it, the better for your child. Here are some ideas from other parents.

- Make sure you know whether you should take your child with you or not. Some schools like parents to bring their children along and others don't.
- Try to turn up on time for each appointment if you are meeting with more than one teacher. Don't overrun your time. If you feel there isn't enough time to cover all the issues at the parents' evening, you can always arrange to talk to the teacher again either on the phone or by making an appointment. Be patient if a teacher is running late.
- Be prepared to listen – try not to jump to conclusions or criticise the teachers or school without really listening to what they have to say. It helps teachers and parents to share information and knowledge about the young person.
- Ask questions – if you don't agree with something or you are not sure what a teacher means, don't feel too embarrassed to ask.
- Try to come away from the meeting with some positive steps that you, your child and the teachers will take to help your child succeed.

- If there are any points of conflict, try to talk about them with teachers and find a solution that is in the best interests of your child. The sooner a problem is addressed the greater the chance of solving it quickly and sensibly.
- If you think a meeting might be difficult, take another adult such as a family member or friend along to give you support and help bring a different perspective to the situation.
- Make a few notes of the meeting if it will help you remember what was said and what was agreed. You can use a summary sheet like the one on the next page if you want to. On page 6 you can see one that has been filled in at a parents' evening for a GCSE student.



Parents' evening summary sheet

Subject/ teacher	Information from tests, projects, homework etc	Teacher's comments	Actions following parents' evening

Parents' evening summary sheet: example

Subject/ teacher	Information from tests, projects, homework etc	Teacher's comments	Actions following parents evening
English	60% in end of term Test B+ for essay	With a bit more effort could improve grades. In comprehension, needs to answer questions in more detail. Also check work carefully for spelling errors.	Parent to read homework and check for spelling mistakes. Child to use website more e.g. the bbc website to have a look at model answers and gain tips.
Maths	55% in test C for most recent homework (algebra)	Algebra is the problem area. Needs some help here.	Attend homework club and ask for help with algebra. Find Maths website that explains basics of algebra.
Science	70% in Mid-term Test B+ for project	Good understanding of subject. Chemistry test coming up next week.	Revise for test and try internet tests.

Setting targets

All schools set **targets** for children. Targets are the goals children should aim to reach in order to move on to the next stage.

At primary school children at KS1 (age 7) and KS2 (age 11) will be aiming for different **levels** in their National Curriculum assessments and tests. At secondary school children will be aiming for different **levels** in their KS3 (age 14) National Curriculum assessments and tests and for different **grades** in their GCSEs in Years 10 and 11 (age 14-16) and in their AS and A levels in Years 12 and 13 (age 16-18).

Any targets schools set for children should be:

- realistic – children should be able to achieve them
- measurable – there should be a way of working out whether children have achieved them or not.

Target setting is helpful for everyone involved because it allows time to reflect and to set realistic expectations and goals for individual children. You can help by knowing:

- the targets your child is expected to reach
- when he or she is expected to reach them
- how you can help him or her reach them.

Many secondary schools have a **target setting day** when parents, children and teachers meet to set targets together.

Once targets have been set, you, your child and the school can agree what you will all do to help your child reach those targets – these are sometimes called **actions**.

Here is an example of some targets and actions agreed by a parent following a target setting day.

Target: I will help my child improve her English by working with her.

Action: I will read with her for 15 minutes each day and then ask her questions to see if she understood.

Target: I will help my child improve her grade in Maths from C to B.

Action: I will spend 15 minutes a day helping her to learn her tables.





Here is an example of some targets and actions agreed by a child following a target setting day.

Target: I will improve my spelling.

Action: I will learn ten difficult words each week.

Target: I will aim not to be late at all (ie zero late arrival).

Action: I will wake up 15 minutes earlier each day so that I can get the earlier bus to school.

Agreeing targets and actions means that everyone – including the child – can see how they are progressing from week to week. And the chances of success are always greater if expectations at home and at school are shared.

After a parents' evening

After a parents' evening your child might have a target and action sheet like the one on the next page.

It's important to find the time to follow this up with your child. This means:

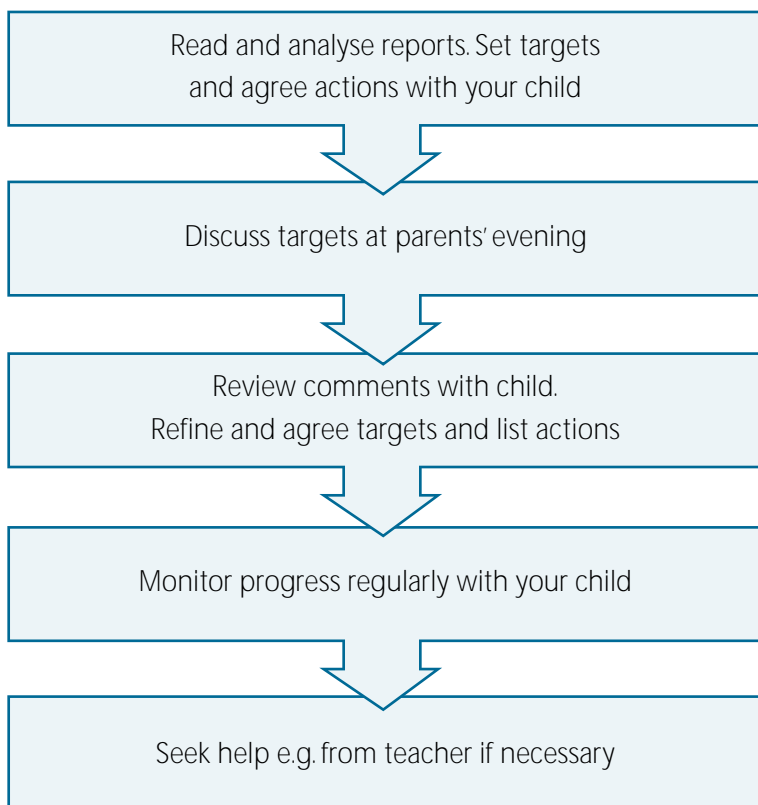
- talking with your child about what was discussed and agreed with teachers
- going through the targets and actions that have been agreed
- perhaps pinning the targets and actions somewhere you can both see them eg a bedroom or kitchen wall
- regularly discussing your child's progress with him or her, making sure you are aware of steps forward and any problems or difficulties.



Targets and actions for Year 12 Spring term

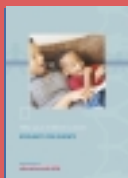
Subject/ teacher	Areas for improvement	My actions
Biology (SN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handing work in on time • Exam techniques • Depth of understanding of certain topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a daily plan to help me meet my homework deadlines • Read more widely and make better use of Internet • List areas where I am having difficulties and seek help e.g. from teachers
Business (RM, SM, HT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical analysis • Deeper understanding of certain areas • Finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend revision classes on Finance • Practise past-papers and get feedback on answers
Geography (MR, RB, EH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to read and give critical analysis in a concise form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask parents and teachers to give feedback on draft essays and use feedback to improve final essay • Practise writing summaries
Biology (Msc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the real meaning of exam questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend some time with the teacher to discuss what questions mean and what information is needed • Make use of Internet Revision Tips and Essay Planning
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use personal planner to plan daily, and weekly timetable. Include TV and sports. • Plan my revision timetable for the holidays.

Parents' evenings – a step by step summary



If your school's parents evenings are not working for you – tell them or raise the issue at a parents' meeting such as a PTA meeting and see what other parents have to say.





Help your children to learn
Resources for parents

Reference HYCL



Help your children to learn
**Making the most of
time with your child**

Reference HYCL/4



Help your children to learn
**Formal meetings
with teachers**

Reference HYCL/2



Help your children to learn
**How is your child doing
at school?**

Reference HYCL/5



Help your children to learn
**Getting the most
from school reports**

Reference HYCL/3

Other leaflets in the series
are also available.

If you would like to share your experiences, or you have any queries or require further information, please visit our website
www.dfes.gov.uk/parents

The information in this leaflet was written by 'Strikers' a parent support group. Further copies of this leaflet, and others in the 'Help your children to learn' series, can be obtained from Prolog: 0845 60 222 60 quoting reference HYCL/1 for this leaflet and the references shown above for others in this series.