

Parent Guidelines for Parents' Evenings

At Neston High School parents' evenings are about trying to establish and strengthen the parent-teacher-school partnership. The aim is to build on the shared interest in your child making progress, and feeling at ease with their learning environment

Top parents' evening tips

1. Preparation is key – draw up a list of questions in advance, and ask your child if there's anything they'd like you to bring up.
2. Don't delay bringing up significant problems or issues until parents' evenings – if something is bothering your child then make an appointment to see their teacher sooner rather than later.
3. Try to keep the relationship with the teacher non-confrontational, even if the news about your child is not what you want to hear.
4. Concentrate on your child – parents' evenings are not the place to bring up issues about school policies.
5. Make sure you have at least one positive thing to congratulate your child on after the parents' evening, to boost their confidence.

General questions for all age groups:

1. What areas is my child strong in?
2. How are you encouraging him/her in those?
3. What areas does he/she find difficult?
4. How are you supporting him/her in those?
5. What can we do at home to help?
6. What activities does my child enjoy?
7. What techniques have been most effective in my child making the most progress?
8. What day is homework set?
9. How does he/she get along with the other children?
10. Does he/she seem happy at school?
11. What is the biggest challenge coming up for my child?
12. What extra-curricular activities do you think my child would enjoy/benefit from taking part in?

Year 7 parents evening:

- How is he/she settling in?
- Are they keeping up with the work?
- Which 'strand' is my child in for this subject?

Year 8 parents evening:

- Are they making the same amount of progress as in year 7?
- Are they in the same 'strand' for your subject as in year 7?
- Have they handed in all homework?

Year 9 parents evening:

- What are you doing at school to prepare for the tests?
- How can we help at home?
- Given their previous record/exam results in this subject, are you happy for my child to take it at GCSE/A Level?

GCSE/A-level options:

- Given their previous record/exam results in this subject, are you happy for my child to study this subject to GCSE/A Level?
- Based on their past performance, what grade do you think my child could realistically achieve in this subject?
- Which areas from their mock exam do they need to improve?

Other questions that you may find useful to ask:

May I tell you about my child?

No one knows your child better than you do, so it's your job to help your child's teacher learn more. Provide your child's teacher with more information on what motivates your child, likes and dislikes, special skills, strengths and weaknesses.

May I tell you about what's going on at home?

Situations like illness, divorce or a new baby may affect your child's school experience, so inform your child's teacher of such circumstances.

How is my child doing socially?

How the child interacts and functions socially in the classroom is a topic that should be addressed at parents' evening, so inquire about their peer relations.

How is my child doing emotionally?

It's also important to ask about your child's emotional health at school. For example, is your child generally happy?

In what areas does my child need improvement?

Your child's teacher sees them from a different perspective than you do. Ask the teacher what personal weaknesses your child needs to work on, and consider the response with an open mind.

What do you think my child is particularly good at?

Find out about the good stuff, too. Ask about personal strengths that will extend beyond school.

Academic questions:

Is my child's performance on track?

Ask how their work compares to Key Stage expectations, but don't try to compare your child to other students. Each child is different and has different strengths and learning abilities.

What do these assessment results really mean?

When it comes to standardised testing and other assessment results, you shouldn't feel bad about asking 'What does this really mean?' Increasingly, assessments are given for school-level progress-monitoring purposes, and it's best not to get too worked up about precisely interpreting every detail.

Is my child doing their best?

One important analysis of your child's performance is whether they're giving the subject their best effort. Does the teacher get the sense that your child is being too casual in their approach or not focusing?

Does my child need extra help in any areas?

Your child's teacher can tell you if your child is falling behind in a skill or a subject. Armed with that information, you can create a plan with your child to work harder in that area, before it gets too late.

What can we do to provide that extra help?

Work together with your child's teacher to create a plan to help your child progress. There may be specific things that you can do at home to help, such as hiring a tutor or helping with homework.

Tricky Situations

If your child is having problems in school or with the teacher, address them head-on.

May I share a concern?

If you're worried about a situation at school, you should bring it up with the teacher. We really appreciate when parents bring an issue to our attention, especially when it's done in a respectful manner.

Can you fill me in on this situation?

When your child has concerns about what's going on at school, you should ask for clarification from the teacher. If you've only been hearing your child's side of the story, there will often be more to it.

Can you tell me about your teaching method?

If you have an issue with the teaching method your child's teacher employs, ask him/her for more information to help you understand it and how it helps your child. You could also ask what they can and will do if the method does not seem to be working with your child specifically.

Do you have any advice?

If your child is going through an issue with something, it is a good idea to ask their teacher for input. After all, they've probably worked with dozens or hundreds of students, and may have some useful advice.

General Information

End the evening with these useful queries.

Is there anything I can do to help?

You could ask if there's anything you can do to help support the teacher in the classroom. There might be supplies you can purchase, prep work you can do at home or other ways you can assist in the classroom.

How can I contact you?

It's good to know how to get in touch with your child's teacher, so find out whether he or she prefers emails, phone calls or written notes.