

Your Child's Learning - Getting Involved



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At a glance

Getting involved in your child's education

- Children spend a lot of their time out of school, so it makes sense to get them to practise in their day-to-day life what they have learned in the classroom.
- You can improve your child's chances at school and later in life by supporting them in how they learn.
- From getting to know what your child should be learning in the National Curriculum to giving them space to do homework, there are simple ways to make a difference without changing the way you live.
- A strong relationship between you and your child's teacher will help your child's education. Always keep in mind that children do best when parents and teachers work well together and focus on finding positive ways forward.
- Parents' evenings are an important opportunity to come up with actions for helping your child progress. Make sure you prepare for and attend them.
- Make the most of the practical tips in this booklet. Some of them you might do already. Others are things that have worked for other parents.

Inside this booklet you will find:

- Practical tips for getting involved
- Advice on getting the most from parents' evening
- Information about talking to teachers

Improving your child's chances

As a parent, you will already know that you are your child's most valuable teacher. The lessons they learn at home will affect how they interact with other people and the world around them. Like most parents, you will probably want to do all you can to make sure they have a good future ahead of them.

Your influence doesn't have to stop when your child is at school. Children whose parents take an active interest in their education are more likely to be successful in the classroom and later in life. So it pays to get involved.

Even if you already play a part in your child's education, you might find this booklet useful. It shows how other parents have got involved without giving up your day-to-day responsibilities. And it applies to children of any age.

Did you know?

Taking an interest in your child's education is the most important thing you can do to help them achieve their full potential.

Ten practical tips

You don't have to be a teacher to improve how your child learns. Even if you didn't enjoy school yourself, there are simple ways to make sure your child stays motivated.

1. Show them you are interested

Get to know their timetable and talk about what they have learned that day. If you are not familiar with a subject, get them to teach you so that they are putting their new knowledge into practice.

2. Give them a quiet place to do homework

If you think there is not enough room in your home, what about clearing the kitchen table for an hour or two in the evening.

3. Help with homework, but don't do it for them

Be there to help your child find answers to problems. If your child needs to research a particular subject, go with them to a library or use the internet together. Make sure they meet homework deadlines.

4. Make the most of TV

Choose programmes that are related to what your child is studying. Ask your child's opinion about what they have watched. Even soaps will cover topics that are relevant – such as bullying or sex and relationships.

5. Take days out that are relevant to schoolwork

Plan family visits to places of historical interest, museums, galleries or even the beach. These can bring lessons to life.

6. Have a handy 'toolbox'

Keep a box of pens, pencils, rubbers, and so on. Buy a dictionary so that you child has all the 'tools' they need to do their homework.

7. Get a good attendance record

Any time off from school affects your child's progress. Make sure they arrive on time, and give them a healthy breakfast before they leave home. It helps their concentration.

8. Stay in touch with the school

Your child's teacher is a great source of help and advice – not just if you child is having problems. They will be able to suggest other ways in which you can help your child with their schoolwork.

9. Get to know the National Curriculum so that you know that your child will study every year.

If you have access to the internet at home, visit www.gov.uk/browse/education and search for 'School Life', where you will find a section on the National Curriculum which explains which subjects your child will study. Or visit a library, where you will be able to use the internet.

10. Don't forget to say 'well done'.

We all need praise now and then, but it's particularly important for a child. Congratulating your child will encourage them to do well next time and show them you genuinely want them to succeed at school.

A group effort

Of course, you are not the only person who can support your child as they move through school. Older children, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and friends of the family can play a part.

Showing people this booklet will help you encourage those close to your child to get involved, so that they can make the most of their time together.

Other sources of help

Short of ideas for activities that are relevant to your child's schoolwork?

Why not ask friends what they get up to with their children. Or speak to your child's teacher, who will have suggestions.

You will also find lots of useful information on the internet such as the BBC site: www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents or www.familylives.org.uk/advice/education

The Family Information Service produces a range of leaflets that may be helpful, especially 'Tackling Homework and Revision' or 'Moving onto Secondary School'. Call the service on 0845 090 8044.

Making the most of parents' evenings

At least once a year you may be invited to your child's school to discuss your child's progress. These meetings aren't just a chance to see how your child has done over the past year. They are a great opportunity to meet teachers and talk about positive ways to help your child move forward.

Before the parents' evening

- Talk with your child about what they have done well and what could be better. Look at your child's report together, if you have already received one.
- Encourage them to talk about more than just schoolwork- this is a good time to discuss attendance, friends and issues like bullying.
- Make notes to take to the parents' evening with you. And check if the school wants you to take your child too.

Meeting the teachers

At the parents' evening, be prepared to listen to what the teachers have to say. Try not to criticise them without listening to what they are saying. You need them to be clear and honest with you to get a good picture of how your child is doing at school.

Don't be embarrassed to ask questions if you don't understand what the teacher is saying. Take notes if you think it will help you to remember what has been said.

If you and a teacher disagree, it's important to find a way forward that puts your child's needs first.

Remember...

... teachers are there to help you, not test you.

After the event

- Go through your notes from the evening and make a list of positive actions your child can take. You might have already agreed some of these with teachers.
- Talk with your child about what was discussed and agreed with the teachers, and go through the list of action points together.
- Pin the action list up where you can both see it, and discuss your child's progress regularly.

If you need to, stay in touch with your child's teacher. They will be able to tell you how things progress at school – particularly if they have said your child has had problems in the past.

Talking to teachers

Even if you had bad experiences with teachers when you were at school, it is in your child's interest for you to have a good relationship with the people teaching them. Every school will have a different approach to working with parents, but your contact doesn't have to be limited to times when your child is having problems or is in trouble.

If you want to know how your child is doing at school, you can ask for an informal chat with their teacher or tutor.

Top tips

- Building a good relationship with teachers.
- Before you speak to a teacher, talk to your child so that they can tell you how things are going at school.
- Phone the school and ask for an appointment that is suitable for you and the teacher. Remember, even if you want to speak to the teacher urgently, they probably won't be able to speak to you straightaway.

- Make notes on what you want to talk about before you meet.
- Be aware that the teacher might see your child very differently from you. Listen carefully to what they have to say.
- Ask for good and bad feedback. If there are problems to be dealt with, it will help if you can also praise your child for their successes.
- If you are talking about your child's difficulties, focus on coming up with a positive solution. The solution should help you and the teacher overcome their problems.
- Always let the school know if there are changes in your family situation. If a teacher knows that your child is dealing with difficult emotions, they can help you support your child.

Remember ...

... It's better for your child if you and your child's teacher work together to overcome any difficulties that arise.

If you are looking for any further information or advice for your family the Family Information Service can help you. We offer a free and impartial information and signposting service for parents and carers of children and young people on a range of topics such as; childcare, benefits, health, leisure and much more. If you don't know who to ask, ask the Family Information Service!

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