

How to Build a Positive Relationship with Your Child's Teacher

All teachers want the best for the children in their care, and all parents want the best for their child. Building a really good relationship with your child's teacher can go a long way to helping you feel reassured that they are happy and getting everything they need at school. Here are some ideas to get you started...

- 1. Meet your child's teacher as soon as possible.** If your child is starting in Reception and the school does home visits, sign up. The teacher is not coming to pass judgement on the cleanliness of your house, but to get to know you and your child. Whatever year group your child is in, make sure you attend all parents' evenings.
- 2. Communication is vital,** but do find out the school's preferred method. Mornings are incredibly busy, and the teacher may not appreciate you collaring them with a list of requests at 8.50am – and they're more likely to forget what it was you told them! Instead, send an email or arrange an appointment if you want to talk face to face.
- 3. If you have an appointment or are coming to parents' evening, arrive on time.** Teachers give up their evenings and family time to attend parents' evenings, and it can be frustrating when a parent doesn't turn up without a good reason. Also, teachers often have 30+ parents to see, so timeslots are limited to 5 or 10 minutes. If you need to discuss something in more detail, make an appointment for another time – the teacher would much rather do this than panic about running over time, and they are more likely to be able to respond properly to what you are saying.
- 4. Try not to overreact if your child tells you something upsetting has happened** at school. Instead, arrange to have a quick chat with the teacher to find out the facts – more often than not there are two sides to the story and things can be sorted out quickly.
- 5. Never talk negatively about the teacher in front of your child.** You need to demonstrate respect so your child can learn to show this too. If you have a problem with something the teacher has done, arrange to talk to him or her about it.
- 6. Unless you absolutely have to, do not go over the teacher's head** if there is a problem. You are more likely to get a quick response if you speak to the teacher directly instead of sending an angry email to the headteacher.
- 7. Name and label everything.** Help teachers to spend their time teaching your child instead of trying to find out who owns the unlabelled jumper/lunch box/shoes in the lost property box. Similarly, if you send in permission slips, money or anything else 'admin', make sure it is in an envelope clearly labelled with your child's name and class.
- 8. If you are genuinely unable to afford the cost of a school trip or activity, speak to the headteacher.** Schools are obliged to state that payment for trips is 'voluntary', with the result that some parents do not pay. However, schools' budgets are incredibly tight, and if parents don't pay, the money has to come from somewhere else – perhaps the budget for art materials or books – or the trip is cancelled. If you receive certain benefits, your child may be entitled to Free School Meals, and the school will receive an annual payment to support their learning – some of this could be used to pay for trips.
- 9. Teach your child independence.** Encourage him/her to hang up his/her own coat, to use a knife and fork and to tidy up after completing an activity. Children learn best in a tidy environment.

10. **Support the school's behaviour policy.** If your child has been disciplined at school, don't fly off the handle. Find out the facts and back up the teacher's actions. If you're unsure, ask for a copy of the behaviour policy so you can check that the correct procedure has been followed.
11. **Say thank you.** Teachers by no means expect a gift at Christmas or the end of the year, but like anybody they appreciate a word of thanks for a job well done.
12. Last and perhaps most important - **trust your child's teacher!** Teachers are highly-trained professionals, who for the most part love the job they do, despite long hours and lots of stress. Don't try to micro-manage your child's education. Wherever you can, remain supportive and help your child at home by doing lots of reading, helping with homework and praising effort rather than attainment. Even if you had a negative experience with your teachers, that doesn't mean your child will. If you are positive and supportive about the school, this will help your child to feel safe and secure when they are there.