

How to simplify the organisation of parents' evenings

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Passionate about parental engagement

Simplifying parents' evenings

Schools are encouraged to regularly provide opportunities for parents or carers to discuss their child's progress with a teacher. These generally take the form of 'parents' evenings' and such events are arguably the most important means of ensuring a high level of parental engagement with your school.

However for many school staff, teachers and parents, parent teacher consultations can be a source of anxiety.

So how can you go about ensuring that your parents' evenings represent a more pleasant experience for *everyone* involved?

An unnecessary stress

Admin staff are normally tasked with organising parents' evenings which can be a huge, and costly, administrative overhead. In the past it has been a largely inefficient process that can be all consuming during parents' evening 'season', when the normal admin tasks still have to be attended to, and which can therefore cause a huge spike in workload.

Meanwhile, teachers have traditionally not been given much say over their schedules at parents' evenings and are often faced with back-to-back sessions with parents. With every best will in the world, it's difficult to keep parents to the allocated time slots, so sessions have a tendency to over-run, sometimes significantly.

There's no question that the organisation of these important opportunities to engage with parents can be a significant draw on time, not to mention being challenging and extremely tiring for teachers. It's also true, however, that anything other than the smooth running of such events on the night can have a negative impact on parental perception.

The last thing a parent wants to experience are lengthy waits, particularly if they have more than one member of staff to see or have more than one child at the school.

The good news is that inefficient, ineffective parents' evenings can easily be avoided.

A simple, technological solution

With the rise of technology developed specifically for education, tools (such as Parent Meeting Service from ConnectUs) have been available for a number of years now that help primary schools to organise and host far more effective meetings. So if you haven't already, you should seriously consider paperless parents' evenings.

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Alleviate admin anarchy

Technology tools streamline the administration of parents' evening significantly. It's extremely easy to create a new event, in fact you can be up and running with your first session within 30 minutes!

Gone are the days of your admin team having to distribute appointment sheets, process reply slips, chase up students, make phone calls home or deal with an influx of queries.

Communications with parents are fully automated, so they will receive emails inviting them to choose their slot. They'll then receive an e-mail confirming their booking as well as reminders of their appointments in advance of the event. Not only does this reduce admin, but it minimises 'no-shows'.

Give teachers more control

Teachers are able to schedule their own availability, including when they can take comfort breaks. They can limit the length of appointments, or leave a buffer in between sessions, so they are less likely to over-run and are afforded a 'breather' if required.

In advance of the event, teachers can even view which parents haven't yet booked a slot and view full appointment schedules on the night.

Empower parents

Parents will find booking online with their teachers to be a simple process that gives them ultimate flexibility in choosing their appointment times. They will receive immediate confirmation of their booking.

A key tool in your parental engagement arsenal

Parents Meeting Service has been proven to increase the number of parents' evening bookings made - and the percentage of parents who actually attend on the night. The technology helps to keep meetings on schedule, which as well as saving significant amounts of time will materially reduce costs.

If you'd like to learn more about Parent Meeting Service from ConnectUs, please don't hesitate to get in touch.