

# BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST AND RESPECT BETWEEN SCHOOL AND HOME

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One of the most important ways of building a relationship of trust and respect with parents is to have regular, personal contact. This can be face-to-face, on the telephone, or in writing, but it must be unique to the parents and their child. In this article, we offer some tips to help you communicate effectively and make the most of your dialogue as well as some dos and don'ts for open evenings and parents' evenings.



## Writing to parents:

- Local language: communicate in your local language as parents may well not speak English
- Two-way communication: invite parents to respond by providing a reply slip or requesting a reply if writing by email
- Parent's Literacy skills: if a parent has poor literacy skills, would your message be better conveyed orally? Avoid using cursive script.
- Clear and simple: make sure your point is clear and does not get lost but remain friendly in the tone of your writing
- Course resources: Make use of course resources in the local language. Many Macmillan primary courses include materials for you to use with parents.



## Face-to-face personal contact with parents:

- Smile and make eye contact: this shows sincerity in what you are saying
- Avoid closed body language and turning away: crossed arms and turning away suggest you are feeling defensive
- Listen: effective communication is just as much about listening as it is about talking. Make sure parents feel confident talking to you and that you are engaged in what they are saying.

## Communicating with parents who don't speak the language:

- You may need a translator – but do not use the child!
- Consider using visual cues in written communication
- Use contextual aids like pictures when showing students' work

## Telephone Contact:

- Background noise: choose a quiet location to make your call so that you can give the call your full attention
- Be prepared: think about the main things you want to say and have them noted down in front of you
- Avoid negative language: using neutral or positive language will keep the parent engaged in what you're saying
- Listen: listening is extremely important to building a good relationship with parents
- Repeat: If you have any doubt that the main points of your call have not been clearly heard, summarise them at the end of the call.



## | Open evenings and parents' evenings

The one thing more nerve-wracking than being face-to-face with parents is being face-to-face with lots of parents so here are our top dos and don'ts:

### DO

- Be prepared. Give plenty of notice and allocate set times to parents so that you can have notes and examples of work at your fingertips and in the correct order.
- Bring examples of students' work but also have examples of non-academic achievements in mind to illustrate your points.
- Keep eye contact, smile and be positive. Even if there is something negative to discuss, make sure you sandwich it between good feedback. Just being negative will disengage both the child and their parents.
- Ask parents their concerns and agree on a strategy. Call them to follow up and invite them to call you if there are any issues. Action the things you promise to do.
- Invite parents to be more involved in their child's learning. You can organise some 'come to school with me days' and suggest they help with reading, school trips and at school events.
- Advise parents on ways they can help at home. Many are unsure and will appreciate help, even if it's just directing them to a helpful website or suggesting some games to play.
- Involve students. Invite students to talk about their work. Why not set up some student-led conferences? Or get students to perform something from the course, for example a short performance and some songs.

### DON'T

- Get your student names mixed up! Make sure you are organised. You could use a checklist of names arranged in order and tick them off as you meet them.
- Just focus on the end of term. Make sure you reflect on the student's performance over the entire year.
- Compare pupils to the class average. Instead, compare them to their individual target. It's important that parents have realistic expectations of their own child and celebrate their individual progression.
- Be nervous or get angry. Keep calm at all times. Being prepared and well-organised will help keep nerves at bay.
- Go over time. Keep strictly to the allocated time for each set of parents. Having a meeting structure and being prepared will help you stay on time.

## Further resources

Read the rest of Macmillan's Home-School Link articles at [macmillanenglish.com/blog-resources/teacher-resources/young-learners](https://www.macmillanenglish.com/blog-resources/teacher-resources/young-learners) and watch the short videos on YouTube (Macmillan Education ELT) – look for the playlist called [Macmillan's Home-School Link for young learners](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL12345678901234567890)

Visit [macmillanenglish.com](https://www.macmillanenglish.com) to see what local language support is available for your Macmillan course.

*This article originally appeared as part of Macmillan's Home-School Link series by Aimee Bates.*